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## *EFSA STRATEGY 2027 – MID-TERM REVIEW*

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# 1. Overview

The *EFSA Strategy 2027 – Science, safe food, sustainability* sets out strategic goals and actions for 2022–2027 to guide the delivery of sustained value to EFSA’s customers, stakeholders and society, in line with its mission, while keeping pace with opportunities and challenges that arise. These are set out in the following three strategic objectives:

- **Strategic Objective 1** – Deliver trustworthy scientific advice and communication of risks from farm to fork. i.e. delivering EFSA’s core business with quality and efficiency to secure the reputation of EFSA, while addressing the changing requirements and expectations from policy, scientific and other developments;
- **Strategic Objective 2** – Ensure preparedness for future risk analysis needs. i.e. co-developing and sustaining, with Member States and EU Institutional partners, the key capabilities of risk assessment and communication (knowledge, expertise, methodologies, and data) to ensure EFSA’s long term relevance;
- **Strategic Objective 3** – Empower people and ensure organizational agility. i.e. managing and enabling EFSA’s operations, with a focus on people, organization, culture, services and tools to increase efficiency and ensure the reputation of EFSA as an accountable institution and an attractive employer.

The above strategic objectives embody EFSA’s business purpose, and for this reason will remain the same over the full course of the EFSA strategy. The strategy implementation plan describes the specific choices EFSA made in terms of areas to focus on, as well as development and improvement priorities for achieving the expected results under the three strategic objectives over the years; this is supported by the monitoring of key performance indicators (KPIs) and the respective targets set. The implementation plan was at its conception divided into two phases, with the first 3 years focusing on the implementation of the transparency regulation (TR) and the following 3 years addressing emerging policy-driven needs. A mid-term review was planned, focusing on the implementation of the strategy in the remaining years and considering progress made and the evolving context, including resource constraints.

In this document, we summarise the main findings and recommendations of the mid-term review; these will be presented and discussed, and eventually endorsed by the EFSA Management Board. Following this, they will form the basis for detailed planning in 2024, leading to the Programming Document for 2025–2027, which will be submitted to the Board for approval in December 2024.

The review was carried out internally by EFSA staff. It included:

- taking stock of a changing context, that is, considering key drivers and recommendations to address (i) internal strengths and weaknesses, with emphasis on evaluating the strategic results achieved to date (using KPIs from the most recent EFSA Annual Activity Report 2023) and (ii) external opportunities and threats, via a qualitative assessment of their evolution (also reported in the latest Programming Document and Annual Activity Report);
- reviewing progress in the strategy implementation plan, that is, conducting a qualitative assessment of the completion of planned developments via key actions (see Table 1) and related recommendations, with an increased focus on actions relating to TR measures.

The review concluded with a set of recommendations and a revised, streamlined list of actions for the EFSA strategy implementation plan.



## 2. Executive summary

### Changing context

The review of the changing context, that is, taking stock of internal strengths and weaknesses (based on KPI targets achieved) and the evolving external opportunities and threats, resulted in the following proposed drivers <sup>(1)</sup> and recommendations to be addressed as a priority under the three EFSA strategic objectives up to 2027.

**Table 1 – Key drivers of progress and proposed recommendations**

Driver	Recommendation
Evolving expectations about the protection of public health	<p>Focus on developing risk assessment and risk communication capabilities already under way, addressing the roadmaps developed with the scientific community (on new approach methodologies; environmental risk assessment; aggregated exposure assessment; and microbiomes) and with communication professionals (coordinated communications).</p> <p>Increase the flexibility of EFSA's operating and funding models, exploring partnerships to the maximum extent, both Member States contributing to EFSA's work and EFSA contributing to EU projects.</p>
Contributing to health protection and an attractive EU market	<p>Explore, in close collaboration with the Directorate-General (DG) for Health and Food Safety, society's increasing expectations about the protection of environmental, human and animal health and the resulting implications for EFSA risk assessment and resources (staff and budget).</p> <p>Prioritise increasing the speed of risk assessment and improving output, using targeted actions to increase productivity and the availability of resources.</p> <p>Maintain the focus on developing partnerships with Member States for EFSA risk assessments.</p> <p>Explore with DG Health and Food Safety further opportunities for structural interventions.</p>
Implementing evolving EU policies via strengthened cooperation	<p>Become a full partner in EU and related international efforts to strengthen the governance and increase the capacity of cross-boundary and cross-disciplinary emerging risk and crisis preparedness.</p> <p>Participate and play an active role in the EU's 'one health' risk assessment and communication research agenda, from identifying priorities to developing new capabilities.</p> <p>Increase collaboration with other EU agencies and Member States as a way of strengthening preparedness, increasing harmonisation and ultimately increasing the speed and excellence of risk assessment outputs across the EU.</p> <p>Place strategic focus on:</p>

<sup>(1)</sup> Drivers were established by evaluating key internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats, followed by synthesizing the findings. The focus was on (i) exploring opportunities to reduce EFSA's weaknesses, (ii) using EFSA's strengths to take advantage of opportunities and reduce threats.



Driver	Recommendation
<p>Leveraging artificial intelligence (AI) and digitalisation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ proactive engagement with the aim of the harmonised co-development of approaches, guidance and tools;</li> <li>▪ addressing the novel requirements stemming from the new regulations under the chemicals strategy for sustainability and, in particular, from the preparation and implementation of the EU common data platform on chemicals;</li> <li>▪ contributing to developments in sustainable food systems;</li> <li>▪ coordinated communication, that is, the tools and processes to be developed once the European Commission general plan on risk communication is adopted.</li> </ul> <p>Increase investments in and partnership working on AI, data mining and interoperable digital platforms for EFSA’s core, enabling and management services.</p> <p>Continue work on structuring (e.g. preparatory work for developing standard data formats) and automating the submission, validation and assessment of regulatory dossiers and on sharing and monitoring data on regulated products, while also considering the new legislative proposals under the chemicals strategy (EU common data platform on chemicals) in collaboration with DG Health and Food Safety, other EU agencies and the Joint Research Centre.</p> <p>Strengthen cybersecurity across EFSA operations.</p> <p>Prioritise the sourcing of the necessary AI and data science resources and expertise to drive the digital transformation.</p>
<p>Prioritising staff engagement and growth</p>	<p>Leverage the highly engaged population to drive forward a working environment and learning organisation characterised by accountability, agility, partnering, innovation and digital dexterity.</p> <p>Continue efforts to simplify processes and ensure that tools are fit for purpose.</p>

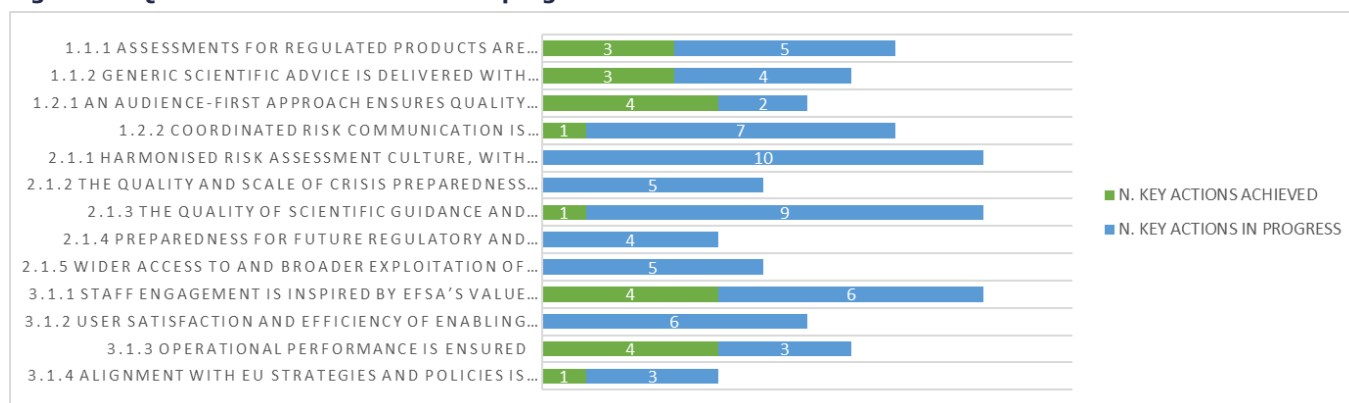


## Strategy implementation plan – progress

The key actions supporting the implementation of the EFSA Strategy 2027 are detailed in Annex I to the [Strategy](#). Two years into the strategy cycle, progress is considered good (see Figure 1):

- 21 key actions (23%) have been achieved and are now in operation
- 69 key actions (77%) are in progress, with developments under way

**Figure 1 – Qualitative assessment of the progress made in 2022–2024**



The majority of key actions that have been achieved come under Strategic Objectives 1 and 3, which cover TR measures and other operational improvements. The implementation of the TR measures is considered largely achieved, that is, (i) processes and tools have been set up and are running smoothly, and further operational improvements will be managed incrementally; (ii) close attention will continue to be given to confidentiality assessment, where efforts are ongoing to find an optimum balance between efficiency and quality; (iii) risk assessment out-and-insourcing and partnerships are still in a nascent stage, and are therefore considered 'partially achieved'; and (iv) EFSA has implemented and will continue to implement coordinated communication with the European Commission and Member States, while acknowledging that further adjustments may be required when the Commission's general plan on risk communication comes into force. The effectiveness of TR measures (on stakeholders', customers' and EFSA's operations) will be assessed in the coming years after sufficient experience of implementing them has been gathered. Initial feedback collected in the annual EFSA strategy survey suggests an increased 'burden' on applicants (see Section 3.2, Strategy implementation plan – Status and recommendations per key action).

Key actions under Strategic Objective 2, designed for 'preparedness', have been progressing well; however, the pace has been slower due to their focus on EFSA programmes and projects developing new capabilities, particularly in improving risk assessment preparedness and digital partnerships, which should come to fruition by 2027.



## Directions

Specific directions are described throughout the assessment sections of the report; a synthesis is provided below.

### **(1) Formalise the following three priority areas in the strategy implementation plan:**

1. increase the speed of risk assessment (main area of performance weakness) to improve the responsiveness of the EU food safety system;
2. improve risk assessment preparedness to address policy and scientific developments;
3. improve EU food safety productivity via digital enablement and cooperation.

All of the above correspond to the areas where most key actions are still in progress. The three priorities will be formalised in an updated version of the strategy implementation plan.

Moreover, the three priorities will be clearly indicated in the EFSA Programming Document 2025–2027 together with a description of the set of projects addressing them.

In this context, EFSA will finalise the relevant new KPIs (listed in Annex 2), with baseline and targets, in the final EFSA Programming Document 2025–2027, together with the planned review of the existing KPIs aimed at further refining and streamlining them.

The EFSA strategic objectives and expected outcomes as described in the EFSA Strategy 2027 will not be affected, as they are broader in nature.

### **(2) Streamline the list of key actions in the strategy implementation plan,** to refine and simplify them, by:

1. removing the key actions that have been largely achieved and consolidating the remaining ones, with a focus on the three priorities listed above;
2. removing the key actions linked to TR implementation, since good progress has been achieved and activities are continuing in operational mode;
3. ensuring that the updated key actions address the recommendations stemming from the changing context drivers described in the document.

In view of the above, the strategy implementation plan (Annex 1 to the [EFSA strategy 2027](#)) will be replaced by Table 2.



Table 2 – Updated key actions list in the EFSA strategy 2027

Expected operational result	No	New key action description
EOR 2.1.1. Harmonised risk assessment culture, with the necessary knowledge and expertise, is ensured at EU level	1	Streamline the end-to-end risk assessment process by reducing non-value-added activities, from pre-submission to publication
	2	Expand the use of sourcing tools and partnership schemes to enhance risk assessment capacity
	3	Develop user-centric, interoperable digital platforms and networks that support risk assessment, coordinated communication, emerging risk detection, crisis preparedness, capacity building and innovation
	4	Establish a working environment that fosters accountability, agility, partnering, innovation and digital dexterity
	5	Evolve EFSA into a learning organization by focusing on skills and behaviours, knowledge sharing, collaboration, and organizational capability improvement
	6	Implement coordinated communication (in line with the European Commission-led general plan on risk communication once adopted)
EOR 2.1.2 The quality and scale of crisis preparedness and the identification of emerging risks is improved.	1	Enhance crisis preparedness and communication governance and capacity
	2	Advance the development of foresight, integrated early warning systems and surveillance methods for emerging risks with partners and stakeholders
EOR 2.1.3 The quality of scientific guidance and methodologies, with the necessary risk assessment capabilities is improved to address future challenges	1	Enhance proactive engagement and align guidance documents, methods, models, tools and data with those of other EU and international entities
	2	Prepare to address risk assessment challenges associated with food and feed systems innovation (*)
	3	Develop and implement systems-based approaches for regulatory environmental risk assessment (*)
	4	Develop and integrate new approach methodologies, including omics and in silico (bio- and chemoinformatics) tools, to advance regulatory risk assessments (*)
	5	Advance methods to assess human and animal exposure to chemicals across regulatory domains, paying particular attention to cumulative and aggregated exposure (*)
	6	Consider how microbiomes (human, animal, environment) could be included in risk assessment (*)
EOR 2.1.4 Preparedness for future regulatory and policy needs addressing the EU Farm to Fork, Biodiversity and Chemical strategies is ensured	1	Contribute to the implementation of the chemicals strategy for sustainability and the EU common data platform on chemicals through EFSA's open data approach and according to findability, accessibility, interoperability and reusability (FAIR) principles
	2	Engage with the EU 'one health' risk assessment and communication research agenda, from identifying priorities to developing new capabilities
	3	Contribute to the development of risk assessment approaches to address sustainable food systems
	4	Explore, in close collaboration with DG Health and Food Safety, the structural implications of EFSA's operations on evolving needs
EOR 2.1.5 Wider access to and broader exploitation of data and analytics is achieved	1	Improve and integrate workflows and tools for seamless collaboration on regulatory dossiers, hazard and exposure assessments, and scientific opinion preparation.
	2	Investigate the use of AI and related technologies for risk assessment and for all EFSA operations, in collaboration with EU institutions
	3	Strengthen information security to keep pace with technology advancements and comply with regulatory standards
	4	Create unified systems to standardise and simplify transactional, administrative, scientific support and management services

(\*) Develop new risk assessment capabilities.





### 3. Assessment

The EFSA Strategy 2027 sets out the multiannual objectives and expected outcomes and operational results of the agency for 2022–2027; the document also describes the changing context that led to the definition of the strategic objectives and includes a high-level implementation plan. EFSA's Strategy 2027 is built on three strategic objectives that will guide EFSA into the future:

- Strategic Objective 1 – deliver trustworthy scientific advice and communication of risks from farm to fork;
- Strategic Objective 2 – ensure preparedness for future risk analysis needs;
- Strategic Objective 3 – empower people and ensure organisational agility.

EFSA's recently updated [integrated management system](#) provides the basis for ensuring that the agency's objectives are achieved through a comprehensive governance, risk and internal control framework. This includes a set of key performance indicators (KPIs) to monitor its progress towards expected outcomes and expected operational results. It also encompasses qualitative analyses and more detailed internal monitoring of EFSA's processes and projects, which supports the strategic and operational steering of the organisation. Within this context, EFSA implements the strategy via a multiannual portfolio consisting of processes and projects and the underlying budget and resource needs.

This section describes the internal assessment carried out, making use of all the above-mentioned information, and the related recommendations with regard to:

- changing context considerations, factoring in external and internal drivers, and supported by an analysis of results achieved so far;
- the strategy implementation plan (key actions);
- Transparency measures implementation actions.



### 3.1. Changing context considerations

Updates on the evolving internal and external context are presented in the [EFSA Programming Document 2024–2026](#), while an overview of results achieved are included in the [2023 Annual Activity Report](#) (see the section 'General context').

Table 3 presents the synthesis of the assessment of the changing context (internal, including results achieved, and external), with the identification of principal drivers for prioritised attention and related recommendations for the second phase of the EFSA strategy <sup>(2)</sup>.

**Table 3 – Changing context (internal and external) considerations: drivers, recommendations and expected operational results**

No	Driver	Recommendation	EOR
1	<p><b>Evolving expectations about the protection of public health.</b> EFSA has been successful in maintaining a high level of quality in the provision of scientific advice, assisted by its efforts in developing scientific guidance, in order to remain relevant, and in implementing the TR measures, which is almost complete.</p> <p>Customer and stakeholder expectations about the scope and scientific value of EFSA’s risk assessments have also been constantly increasing; this has been coupled with scientific developments with the potential to significantly improve risk assessments via the introduction of new risk assessment capabilities.</p> <p>The TR funding for increasing preparedness (redirected funds as a preventive alternative to verification studies) is considered key and is in full progress; however, this rise in demand (quality as well as quantity) has been only partially accompanied by extra resources. The effects of inflation on the availability of resources for operational activities are already visible, coupled with the prospect of increased budgetary constraints due to sociopolitical dynamics.</p> <p>EU policy ambitions and societal expectations in ‘sensitive’ areas (e.g. pesticides) would necessitate faster methodological development and safety evaluations, and therefore the resources to sustain these; the upcoming external evaluation of EFSA, in the context of the preparations for a new post-2027 multiannual financial framework and EFSA strategy, provide fertile ground for exploration.</p>	<p>Focus on developing risk assessment and risk communication capabilities already under way, addressing the roadmaps developed with the scientific community (on new approach methodologies; environmental risk assessment; aggregated exposure assessment; and microbiomes) and with communication professionals (coordinated communications).</p> <p>Increase flexibility in the operating and funding models, exploring partnerships to the maximum extent, both Member States contributing to EFSA’s work and EFSA contributing to EU projects.</p> <p>Explore, in close collaboration with the Directorate-General (DG) for Health and Food Safety, society’s increasing expectations about the protection of environmental, human and animal health, and the resulting implications for EFSA risk assessment and its underlying need for resources (staff and budget).</p>	<p>2.1.1 2.1.3 2.1.4</p>

<sup>(2)</sup> Drivers were established by evaluating the key internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats, followed by synthesizing the findings. The focus was on (i) exploring opportunities to reduce EFSA’s weaknesses, (ii) using EFSA’s strengths to take advantage of opportunities and reduce threats.



No	Driver	Recommendation	EOR
2	<p><b>Contributing to health protection and an attractive EU market.</b> The evolving sociopolitical situation across Europe points to a heightened emphasis on driving innovation and economic growth in the EU market. Results in terms of the throughput time of risk assessment questions and output volumes are still below expectations; the targets originally set to decrease the high stock of questions (work in progress), particularly in the area of regulatory products, have not been met, although there have been small improvements in timeliness and output volumes, made possible through process improvements and increases in risk assessment capacity via internal and external resources.</p> <p>Some areas of risk assessment have seen relevant increases in demand (volume of requests) in recent years, and that is expected to continue (e.g. feed applications, food contact materials, novel foods). The TR out-/insourcing solution to address resource bottlenecks remains promising; however, it will require considerably more time in view of the diverse challenges across the Member States.</p> <p>Recent experience from the implementation of some of the TR measures indicates an 'increased burden' in terms of effort and time. An (ongoing) root cause analysis indicates that important opportunities to improve speed and reduce effort lie in reducing rework and eliminating non-value adding activities in the end-to-end risk assessment.</p> <p>The pre-submission phase is estimated to present half of the total improvement opportunity ('right first time'); future action will also benefit from structural interventions, such as in the flexibility of panel and working group composition, in the role of EFSA vis-à-vis pre-submission advice to applicants and in the Member State-based model for pesticides assessment. Improving the speed of risk assessment will contribute to the attractiveness of the EU market, fostering innovation and competitiveness.</p>	<p>Prioritise increasing the speed of risk assessment and improving output, using targeted actions to increase productivity and the availability of resources.</p> <p>Maintain focus on developing partnerships with Member States for EFSA risk assessments.</p> <p>Explore with DG Health and Food Safety further opportunities for structural interventions.</p>	2.1.1
3	<p><b>Implementing evolving EU policies via strengthened cooperation.</b> Recent pandemics have demonstrated again the need for assessing risks at the interfaces between wildlife habitats, domestic animals and the human ecosphere taking a systemic perspective.</p> <p>Future risk assessments are expected to have to consider the impact of international trade, human movements and climate change on microbiological and chemical risks. This has resulted in policy action calling for strengthening joint preparedness and response strategies, and</p>	<p>Become a full partner in EU and related international efforts to strengthen the governance and increase the capacity of cross-boundary and cross-disciplinary emerging risk and crises preparedness.</p> <p>Participate and play an active role in the EU's 'one health' risk assessment and communication research agenda, from identifying priorities to developing new capabilities.</p>	2.1.3 2.1.4 2.1.5



No	Driver	Recommendation	EOR
	<p>adopting the 'one health' approach, to which EFSA has been actively contributing.</p> <p>The EU policies under the European Green Deal, that is, the farm-to-fork strategy, chemicals strategy for sustainability and biodiversity strategy, are being translated into legislative proposals and sectoral regulations (e.g. on nutrition, pesticides, food contact materials/recycling and new genomic techniques in plants, and the general plan on risk communication) that introduce new responsibilities, modify operational methods and raise quality standards for EFSA risk assessment.</p> <p>All the above-mentioned policies call for strengthened cooperation across EU institutions, Member States and international organisations in research and in developing joint capabilities, harmonised approaches and integrated assessments, which also contribute to an attractive EU market. These developments are occurring against a backdrop of countering concerns about a rise in nationalism and potential fragmentation of cooperation, fake news and the polarisation of scientific perceptions.</p>	<p>Increase collaborations with other EU agencies and Member States as a way of strengthening preparedness, increasing harmonisation and ultimately increasing the speed and excellence of risk assessment outputs across the EU.</p> <p>Strategic focus is to be placed on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ proactive engagement with the aim of the harmonised co-development of approaches, guidance and tools;</li> <li>▪ addressing the new requirements stemming from the new regulations under the chemicals strategy for sustainability and, in particular, from the preparation and implementation of the EU common data platform on chemicals;</li> <li>▪ contributing to developments in sustainable food systems;</li> <li>▪ coordinated communication, that is, the tools and processes to be developed once the European Commission general plan on risk communication is adopted.</li> </ul>	
4	<p><b>Leveraging artificial intelligence (AI) and digitalisation.</b></p> <p>Developments in AI, digitalisation and data science can provide solutions to support increasingly complex risk assessments and data analysis in an interconnected ecosystem. EFSA has been exploring, piloting and implementing AI in priority areas and, together with other EU agencies, has started to look at the implications for IT security, data ownership, governance and the need for relevant resources and expertise, while bearing in mind the evolving EU legislation (such as the EU AI Act and the EU Cybersecurity Act).</p>	<p>Increase investments in and partnership working on AI, data mining and interoperable digital platforms for EFSA's core, enabling and management services.</p> <p>Continue work on structuring (e.g. preparatory work for developing standard data formats) and automating the submission, validation and assessment of regulatory dossiers and on sharing and monitoring data on regulated products, while also considering the new legislative proposals under the chemicals strategy (EU common data platform on chemicals) in collaboration with DG Health and Food Safety, other EU agencies and the Joint Research Centre.</p> <p>Strengthen cybersecurity across EFSA operations.</p> <p>Prioritise the sourcing of the necessary AI and data science resources and expertise to drive the digital transformation.</p>	2.1.1 2.1.5



No	Driver	Recommendation	EOR
5	<p><b>Prioritising staff engagement and growth.</b> Results from the recent staff surveys have demonstrated a high level of engagement and positive results on almost all fronts. Areas of attention include the continuing focus on effective leadership for the management of change and the efficient evolution of processes and tools; this is particularly important in view of the challenges brought forward by considerable organisational change (stemming from regulatory and efficiency requirements) in the recent years, which is expected to continue in the near future.</p>	<p>Leverage the highly engaged staff to drive forward a working environment and learning organisation characterised by accountability, agility, partnering, innovation and digital dexterity.</p> <p>Continue efforts to simplify processes and ensure that tools are fit for purpose.</p>	2.1.1



### 3.2. Strategy implementation plan – status and recommendations per key action

Tables 5–17 present an assessment of the progress made in implementing the key actions of the EFSA strategy 2027, presented under each expected operational result (EOR); recommendations for the continuation of these actions in the second half of the strategy cycle are also provided.

**Table 4 – Model for estimating key action level of completion.**

	Concept	Feasibility	Development	Transition to use	Sustained use
Completion status (up to)	10 %	20 %	70 %	90 %	100 %

**Table 5 – EOR 1.1.1: status per key action and recommendation for the second half of the strategy cycle, 2025–2027**

EOR 1.1.1. Assessments for regulated products are delivered with quality and efficiency	Yet to start (0 %)	Concept and feasibility (1–20 %)	Development (21–70 %)	Transition to use (71–90 %)	Sustained use (91–100 %)	Recommendation
1.1.1.01. Implement notification of studies and pre-submission advice and public consultations on renewals (TR)					100 %	Remove
1.1.1.02. Provide guidance to applicants on regulated product dossier submissions (including submission of data)			70 %			Keep and consolidate
1.1.1.03. Apply confidentiality assessments and data disclosures (TR)					100 %	Remove
1.1.1.04. Broaden the use of in- and outsourcing tools and partnership schemes, ensuring appropriate risk assessment capacity (TR)			70 %			Keep and consolidate
1.1.1.05. Apply broadened engagement of partners and stakeholders based on openness and transparency (TR)					100 %	Remove
1.1.1.06. Implement relevant guidance, newly developed methodologies and lean processes			50 %			Keep and consolidate
1.1.1.07. Implement increased automation of regulatory dossier processing (NOS checks, confidentiality assessment, validation), hazard and exposure assessments (e.g. R4EU, Meta Path, Ruedis) and draft assessment report preparation			60 %			Keep and consolidate



<b>EOR 1.1.1. Assessments for regulated products are delivered with quality and efficiency</b>	<b>Yet to start (0 %)</b>	<b>Concept and feasibility (1–20 %)</b>	<b>Development (21–70 %)</b>	<b>Transition to use (71–90 %)</b>	<b>Sustained use (91–100 %)</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
1.1.1.08. Make use of wider, improved and new data streams			50 %			Keep and consolidate

**Table 6 – EOR 1.1.2: status per key action and recommendation for the second half of the strategy cycle, 2025–2027**

<b>1.1.2. Generic scientific advice is delivered with quality and efficiency</b>	<b>Yet to start (0 %)</b>	<b>Concept and feasibility (1–20 %)</b>	<b>Development (21–70 %)</b>	<b>Transition to use (71–90 %)</b>	<b>Sustained use (91–100 %)</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
1.1.2.01. Implement mandate agreement methodology, including on scientific value, and toll gate check					100 %	Remove
1.1.2.02. Implement fit-for-purpose protocol development and publication, including problem formulation and the use of appraisal tools					100 %	Remove
1.1.2.03. Broaden the use of in outsourcing tools and partnership schemes, ensuring appropriate risk assessment capacity (TR)			70 %			Keep and consolidate
1.1.2.04. Apply broadened engagement of partners and stakeholders based on openness and transparency (TR)					100 %	Remove
1.1.2.05. Implement relevant guidance, newly developed methodologies and lean processes			50 %			Keep and consolidate
1.1.2.06. Make use of wider, improved and new data streams			50 %			Keep and consolidate
1.1.2.07. Implement flexible processes to integrate and assess data for urgent/rapid advice.			60 %			Keep and consolidate



**Table 7 – EOR 1.2.1: status per key action and recommendation for the second half of the strategy cycle, 2025–2027**

1.2.1. An audience-first approach ensures quality throughout risk communication.	Yet to start (0 %)	Concept and feasibility (1–20 %)	Development (21–70 %)	Transition to use (71–90 %)	Sustained use (91–100 %)	Recommendation
1.2.1.01. Conduct structured and systematic social research communication priorities and campaigns (TR)					100 %	Remove
1.2.1.02. Provide technical assistance in the area of risk communication on request of risk managers (TR)					100 %	Remove
1.2.1.03. Spearhead EU 'One health – one environment' communication science research agenda			60 %			Keep and consolidate
1.2.1.04. Extend accessibility and strategic reach of communication through multilingual approaches					100 %	Remove
1.2.1.05. Assess the impact of EFSA communication activities through real-time analytics					100 %	Remove
1.2.1.06. Gather real-time user data to customise what users experience on EFSA digital platforms (i.e. personalised journeys)			60 %			Keep and consolidate





**Table 8 – EOR 1.2.2: status per key action and recommendation for the second half of the strategy cycle, 2025–2027**

1.2.2. Coordinated risk communication is delivered with the European Commission, Member States and ENVI agencies	Yet to start (0 %)	Concept and feasibility (1–20 %)	Development (21–70 %)	Transition to use (71–90 %)	Sustained use (91–100 %)	Recommendation
1.2.2.01. Provide support to European Commission in preparing the general plan risk communication (TR)					100 %	Keep and consolidate in view of the upcoming European Commission general plan on risk communication
1.2.2.02. Strengthen coordination models for risk communication at EU level (TR)			70 %			Keep and consolidate
1.2.2.03. Strengthen digital platforms, clear brand and functions (e.g. Open EFSA, EFSA Journal, upgraded website, common platforms with partners) (TR)				75 %		Keep and consolidate
1.2.2.04. Evolve primary communication channels (e.g. EFSA Journal) to enable harmonisation of risk assessment at the EU and international levels			70 %			Keep and consolidate
1.2.2.05. Create mainstream campaigns that serve as reference points for coordinated communications on food in the EU (TR)				90 %		Keep and consolidate
1.2.2.06. Embed social media approach in the content mix, increasing influence in digital space via community management			70 %			Keep and consolidate
1.2.2.07. Enhance joint crisis communication for food safety that serves as a reference point in the EU				75 %		Keep and consolidate
1.2.2.08. Tackle false information about food safety in partnership with the Joint Research Centre, Member States and other relevant actors (TR)			25 %			Keep and consolidate



**Table 9 – EOR 2.1.1: status per key action and recommendation for the second half of the strategy cycle, 2025–2027**

2.1.1. Harmonised risk assessment culture, with the necessary knowledge and expertise, is ensured at the EU level	Yet to start (0 %)	Concept and feasibility (1–20 %)	Development (21–70 %)	Transition to use (71–90 %)	Sustained use (91–100 %)	Recommendation
2.1.1.01. Develop strategic and operational partnerships with Member State competent organisations and EU agencies to boost the sustainability of the risk assessment system (TR)			50 %			Keep and consolidate
2.1.1.02. Support the function and expansion of networks and partnerships through shared platforms and infrastructures (EFSA, Member States, other EU agencies and international bodies)			40 %			Keep and consolidate
2.1.1.03. Promote scientific cooperation, beyond the EU, with international organisations and risk assessment bodies in Third countries				80 %		Keep and consolidate
2.1.1.05. Establish interoperable digital platforms to support the generation of idea, analysis and evaluation of data projects as part of an innovation community (e.g. for academia, stakeholders, modelling experts)			50 %			Keep and consolidate
2.1.1.06. Create innovative workforce planning and sourcing based on effective and diverse expertise scanning and out/insourcing tools, complemented by artificial intelligence and crowdsourcing (TR)			30 %			Keep and consolidate
2.1.1.07. Provide EU capacity building and competency management development actions in close cooperation with Member States and EU agencies (TR)			50 %			Keep and consolidate
2.1.1.08. Implement a strengthened engagement framework and expand the toolkit of engagement methods and outreach (TR)				90 %		Keep and consolidate
2.1.1.09. Expand the use of societal insights for communication engagement and in support of a harmonised risk assessment culture (TR)				90 %		Keep and consolidate
2.1.1.10. Develop coordinated models for risk communication at EU level (TR)				75 %		Keep and consolidate



2.1.1. Harmonised risk assessment culture, with the necessary knowledge and expertise, is ensured at the EU level	Yet to start (0 %)	Concept and feasibility (1–20 %)	Development (21–70 %)	Transition to use (71–90 %)	Sustained use (91–100 %)	Recommendation
2.1.1.11. Establish networks and an engagement framework with EU-funded research projects aimed at supporting risk assessment capacity building and risk communication				80 %		Keep and consolidate

**Table 10 – EOR 2.1.2: status per key action and recommendation for the second half of the strategy cycle, 2025–2027**

2.1.2. The quality and scale of crisis preparedness and the identification of emerging risks is improved	Yet to start (0 %)	Concept-feasibility (1–20 %)	Development (21–70 %)	Transition to use (71–90 %)	Sustained use (91–100 %)	Recommendation
2.1.2.01. Strengthen foresight and horizon scanning in open dialogue with partners and stakeholders			50 %			Keep and consolidate
2.1.2.02. Participate in strengthened EU governance on crisis preparedness and support enhanced Member State capacity and preparedness to respond to crises				80 %		Keep and consolidate
2.1.2.03. Link early warning systems across different sectors and facilitate access to data across EU bodies and Member States				80 %		Keep and consolidate
2.1.2.04. Support the development and implementation of monitoring and surveillance approaches for newly emerging risks		20 %				Keep and consolidate
2.1.2.05. Ensure coordinated media and social media monitoring and early warning communication				80 %		Keep and consolidate



**Table 11 – EOR 2.1.3: status per key action and recommendation for the second half of the strategy cycle, 2025–2027**

2.1.3. The quality of scientific guidance and methodologies, with the necessary risk assessment capabilities, is improved to address future challenges	Yet to start (0 %)	Concept and feasibility (1–20 %)	Development (21–70 %)	Transition to use (71–90 %)	Sustained use (91–100 %)	Recommendation
2.1.3.01. Ensure forward-looking engagement with partners and stakeholders to achieve synergies on risk assessment topics of mutual interest and facilitate the development and implementation of harmonised risk assessment methodologies	70 %					Keep and consolidate
2.1.3.02. Prepare to address risk assessment challenges associated with food and feed systems innovation	50 %					Keep and consolidate
2.1.3.03. Develop risk–benefit approaches for chemical and biological hazards in human and environmental risk assessment	10 %					Remove; to be addressed on a case-by-case basis
2.1.3.04. Develop and implement systems-based approaches for regulatory environmental risk assessment	30 %					Keep and consolidate
2.1.3.05. Establish criteria and scientific assessment options to support the application of tiered approaches of methodological complexity to deliver fit-for-purpose assessments				100 %		Remove
2.1.3.06. Develop and integrate new approach methodologies (NAMs) and omics for regulatory risk assessment	50 %					Keep and consolidate
2.1.3.07. Develop risk assessment of combined exposure to multiple chemicals, across regulatory domains	20 %					Keep and consolidate
2.1.3.08. Integrate bioinformatic and cheminformatic approaches, technologies and data into next-generation risk assessment	20 %					Keep and consolidate
2.1.3.09. Consider how microbiomes could be included in risk assessment and develop tools to enable this	20 %					Keep and consolidate
2.1.3.10. Keep EFSA’s risk assessment processes updated in line with evolving regulatory policy and quality drivers (TR)	50 %					Keep and consolidate



**Table 12 – EOR 2.1.4: status per key action and recommendation for the second half of the strategy cycle, 2025–2027**

2.1.4. Preparedness for future regulatory and policy needs addressing the EU farm-to-fork, biodiversity and chemicals strategies is ensured	Yet to start (0 %)	Concept and feasibility (1–20 %)	Development (21–70 %)	Transition to use (71–90 %)	Sustained use (91–100 %)	Recommendation
2.1.4.01. Strengthen role and advocacy in EU and Member State research programmes, together with other regulatory science bodies, to ensure good coverage of research priorities and full and open access to research results				80 %		Keep and consolidate
2.1.4.02. Develop risk assessment approaches to address 'one health' policy needs and sustainable food and feed systems		15 %				Keep and consolidate
2.1.4.03. Contribute to the Horizon Europe research programme cycle				80 %		Keep and consolidate
2.1.4.04. Support the implementation of the chemicals strategy for sustainability			30 %			Keep and consolidate

**Table 13 – EOR 2.1.5: status per key action and recommendation for the second half of the strategy cycle, 2025–2027**

2.1.5. Wider access to and broader exploitation of data and analytics is achieved	Yet to start (0 %)	Concept and feasibility (1–20 %)	Development (21–70 %)	Transition to use (71–90 %)	Sustained use (91–100 %)	Recommendation
2.1.5.01. Strengthen data governance and data partnership in collaboration with Member States, EU institutional partners and international organisations			30 %			Keep and consolidate
2.1.5.02. Improve data quality, interoperability, discoverability and usability			70 %			Keep and consolidate
2.1.5.03. New data streams are used to improve risk assessment			30 %			Keep and consolidate
2.1.5.04. Deliver data analysis services, including artificial intelligence-enabled innovative analytics			50 %			Keep and consolidate
2.1.5.05. Ensure wide and timely use of open food safety data by digital platform-based collaboration and EU One Health Ecosystem			65 %			Keep and consolidate



**Table 14 – EOR 3.1.1: status per key action and recommendation for the second half of the strategy cycle, 2025–2027**

3.1.1. Staff engagement is inspired by EFSA’s value system	Yet to start (0 %)	Concept and feasibility (1–20 %)	Development (21–70 %)	Transition to use (71–90 %)	Sustained use (91–100 %)	Recommendation
3.1.1.01. Implement activities to increase EFSA’s attractiveness for skilled staff					100 %	Remove
3.1.1.02. Scout, source, develop and deploy competencies, engaging and aligning a diverse, committed and high-performing workforce to EFSA’s mission and culture					100 %	Remove
3.1.1.03. Optimise EFSA’s human capital via strategic succession planning, ensuring growth and retention of internal talents					100 %	Remove
3.1.1.04. Evolve EFSA into a Learning Organisation at individual (skills and behaviours), team (knowledge sharing, collaboration and issue-solving) and organisation – wide (capability improvement, talent engagement and alignment to strategy) level			70 %			Keep and consolidate
3.1.1.05. Set up a working environment and processes conducive to collaboration, innovation and knowledge sharing			70 %			Keep and consolidate
3.1.1.06. Leverage and promote new ways of working, fostering autonomy, accountability, and digital dexterity			70 %			Keep and consolidate
3.1.1.07. Strengthen managerial and leadership competencies and empower people			70 %			Keep and consolidate
3.1.1.08. Enforce an agile culture and develop performance management, change management and business transformation capabilities			70 %			Keep and consolidate
3.1.1.09. Continuously nurture staff engagement and enforce reward and recognition mechanisms					100 %	Remove
3.1.1.10. Develop a knowledge management framework, fostering continuous learning and collaboration between in-house staff and external experts			60 %			Keep and consolidate



**Table 15 – EOR 3.1.2: status per key action and recommendation for the second half of the strategy cycle, 2025–2027**

3.1.2. User satisfaction and efficiency of enabling services is enhanced	Yet to start (0 %)	Concept and feasibility (1–20 %)	Development (21–70 %)	Transition to use (71–90 %)	Sustained use (91–100 %)	Recommendation
3.1.2.01. Ensure via a partnering approach the provision of best-in-class management services and solutions in support to the core business				80 %		Keep and consolidate
3.1.2.02. Integrate, standardise and streamline the provision of transactional, administrative and scientific support services via a shared service office and single point of contact			70 %			Keep and consolidate
3.1.2.03. Evolve confidentiality, competing interest and public access to document services to align with modern business practices (e.g. outsourcing of technical activities) (TR)				80 %		Keep and consolidate
3.1.2.04. Implement process leaning initiatives to standardise, streamline and automate as much as possible the activities currently performed				80 %		Keep and consolidate
3.1.2.05. Enhance information security, business continuity and other services integrating developments in technological infrastructure and digitalisation			70 %			Keep and consolidate
3.1.2.06. Optimise financial tools and instruments (grants, etc.) to foster participation and engagement of Member States in EFSA’s activities				80 %		Keep and consolidate

**Table 16 – EOR 3.1.3: status per key action and recommendation for the second half of the strategy cycle, 2025–2027**

3.1.3. Operational performance is ensured	Yet to start (0 %)	Concept and feasibility (1–20 %)	Development (21–70 %)	Transition to use (71–90 %)	Sustained use (91–100 %)	Recommendation
3.1.3.01. Responsive governance and decision-making					100 %	Remove
3.1.3.02. Integrate and streamline EFSA’s management systems				80 %		Keep and consolidate
3.1.3.03. Apply an integrated yet lean set of assurance and internal control mechanisms to ensure compliance					100 %	Remove
3.1.3.04. Ensure optimal budget execution in compliance with rules and regulations					100 %	Remove



3.1.3. Operational performance is ensured	Yet to start (0 %)	Concept and feasibility (1–20 %)	Development (21–70 %)	Transition to use (71–90 %)	Sustained use (91–100 %)	Recommendation
3.1.3.05. Strengthen the use of results and performance metrics to steer and optimise the strategy delivery				80 %		Keep and consolidate
3.1.3.06. Integrate quality management objectives and practices in EFSA’s processes to ensure continuing customer satisfaction					100 %	Remove
3.1.3.07. Implement a comprehensive set of continuous improvement and learning actions to achieve regular efficiency improvements				80 %		Keep and consolidate

**Table 17 – EOR 3.1.4: status per key action and recommendation for the second half of the strategy cycle, 2025–2027**

3.1.4. Alignment with EU strategies and policies is ensured	Yet to start (0 %)	Concept and feasibility (1–20 %)	Development (21–70 %)	Transition to use (71–90 %)	Sustained use (91–100 %)	Recommendation
3.1.4.01. Further develop shared resources, capabilities and services with other EU institutions and agencies				80 %		Keep and consolidate
3.1.4.02. Promote joint governance mechanisms with the European Commission and EU agencies				80 %		Keep and consolidate
3.1.4.03. Encourage agile and ecosystem-conscious strategic planning and work programming				80 %		Keep and consolidate
3.1.4.04. Expand and operationalise relations and exchanges with EU institutional partners					100 %	Remove





### 3.3. Implementation of transparency regulation measures – status and recommendations

Tables 18–21 present an assessment of the progress made in implementing actions addressing the TR objectives (that were embedded in the Strategy 2027 implementation plan) and provide recommendations on the interventions needed to meet the strategy goals. More detailed reporting on each TR measure is provided in Annex 1 to this document.

**TR objective 1.** Improve and clarify the rules on transparency, especially with regards to the scientific studies supporting risk assessment.

**Table 18 – Progress and recommendations regarding the measures implemented under TR objective 1**

TR action	TR implementation (process/tool)	State of play	Recommendation
Content dossier disclosure	Implemented	Dossier disclosure is fully implemented and has reached a good maturity level.	Deliver continuous improvements to the IT tools to increase their usefulness to the public.
Management of confidentiality content	Implemented	The provision is described in 'Practical arrangements concerning transparency and confidentiality'. Its implementation has advanced considerably, and related processes have been consolidated. However, IT tool implementation – in particular in the food chain (e.g. the Appian platform) – remains a major challenge. In addition, the applicant's submission behaviour (as concerns number of applications and number of confidentiality requests) remains difficult to predict, which poses challenges in terms of planning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Address ongoing IT issues with targeted actions.</li> <li>▪ Assess the effects of proactive transparency and applicant submission patterns.</li> <li>▪ Streamline the confidentiality framework, potentially reducing <i>ex ante</i> exceptions over time (see Annex 1 for further details).</li> </ul>



**TR objective 2.** Increase the guarantees of reliability, objectivity and independence of studies used by EFSA in its risk assessment for authorisation purposes.

**Table 19 – Progress and recommendations regarding the measures implemented under TR objective 2**

TR action	TR implementation (process/tool)	Maturity level	Conclusion/recommendation
Notification of study	Implemented	The notification of studies provision is well implemented and described in 'Decision laying down the practical arrangement on pre-submission phase and public consultations'. However, additional work is required to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• improve integration of existing tools;</li> <li>• raise awareness of the legal requirements to notify the studies, particularly with first-time applicants;</li> <li>• better define the studies that are to be notified.</li> </ul>	Explore a possible amendment of the practical arrangements.
Pre-submission advice	Implemented	Pre-submission advice is well implemented and described in 'Decision laying down the practical arrangement on pre-submission phase and public consultations'. However, the following issues have been identified: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• requests from business operators to receive additional scientific advice;</li> <li>• the service is not well known among first-time applicants and small and medium-sized enterprises;</li> <li>• the number of general pre-submission advice (GPSA) requests and the submission of the list of intended studies for renewal (i.e. the first step of the renewal pre-submission advice process) is low;</li> <li>• the number of public comments on the list of intended studies for renewal applications is extremely low.</li> </ul>	Explore a possible amendment of the practical arrangements to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ streamline the process of GPSA requests;</li> <li>▪ enhance the GPSA support to small and medium-sized enterprises;</li> <li>▪ solicit comprehensive information in renewal applications to increase the relevance of renewal pre-submission advice to applicants.</li> </ul>
Public consultations	Implemented	Provision of public consultations is implemented as per the TR measure. However, a few remaining issues regarding the integration of Connect EFSA and OpenEFSA tools are still pending resolution. With regard to customer engagement, a very small contribution is received from the public through public consultations on the non-confidential version of validated applications.	Continue investigating the root causes of low engagement on the non-confidential version of validated applications as part of the EFSA quality management system.



TR action	TR implementation (process/tool)	Maturity level	Conclusion/recommendation
Commission audits	Implemented	The provision is fully implemented by SANTE F4 <sup>3</sup> , with EFSA support and follow-up when needed.	Not applicable.
Commission verification studies	Implemented differently (preventively) in the absence of verification studies requests received from the European Commission	With the agreement of the Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety, in the absence of specific requests, budget initially set for verification studies is allocated to preparedness initiatives. The aim is to reduce future verification needs. This is actioned through strategic roadmaps and targeted follow-up projects.	Assess/evaluate the effectiveness of preparedness activities as a preventive measure to reduce the need for verification studies (in preparation for the new multiannual financial framework, post 2027).

<sup>3</sup> The Trade related controls, residues and feed safety Unit of DG for Health and Food Safety



**TR objective 3.** Improve the governance, strengthen the involvement of Member States in and address the limitations affecting the long-term scientific capacity of EFSA.

**Table 20 – Progress and recommendations regarding the measures implemented under TR objective 3**

TR action	TR implementation (process/tool)	Maturity level	Conclusion/recommendation
Member State representatives and non-governmental organisations in the EFSA’s Management Board	Implemented	The new Management Board is operational as of 1 July 2022.	Not applicable.
New expert selection process	Implemented	The ‘Implementing Rules of the Management Board of the European Food Safety Authority laying down the rules on the selection, appointment and operations of the Scientific Committee, Scientific Panels and of their Working Groups’ were adopted in 2022; the new process has been implemented in the current panel renewal.	The new expert selection process led to a significant increase in the number of applications received. A feedback mechanism will be put in place to review the fulfilment of mutual commitments outlined under the Declaration of Commitment, facilitating exchange between EFSA and experts regarding reciprocal contribution and support.
New experts’ indemnity regime	Implemented	Expert compensation guide is applicable from 1 January 2023.	Continue monitoring the efficiency of the new compensation guide, considering the changing environment.
Outsourcing of preparatory work and insourcing of experts’ work	Partially implemented	EFSA is expanding its risk assessment capacity through outsourcing initiatives, including individual scientific advisors (ISA) and tasking grants; however, establishing partnerships with Member States is more time-consuming and complex than originally foreseen, due to diverse systems and interests. In addition, EFSA (i) has increased the availability of internal resources for risk assessment, (ii) has been investigating artificial intelligence applications and how to optimise panel productivity processes, and (iii) has a reserve list of experts available for replacing panel members.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Incrementally increase EFSA’s capacity via outsourcing and maintain this activity as a key priority.</li> <li>▪ Keep exploring how to optimise panel productivity, leveraging artificial intelligence and safeguarding EFSA staff responsible for risk assessment.</li> </ul>



**TR objective 4.** Develop more effective and transparent risk communication with the public in collaboration with Member States.

**Table 21 – Progress and recommendations regarding the measures implemented under TR objective 4**

TR action	TR implementation (process/tool)	Maturity level	Conclusion/recommendation
Coordinated communication between risk assessors and risk managers	Implemented (subject to further work in the context of the European Commission general plan on risk communication)	The planned activities are under development. Coordinated communication campaigns have been launched; the EU framework for coordinated communication is planned to be signed by Member States. There are additional planned actions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>develop the Member State communication coordinator (MSCC) role to bolster communication and inform citizens effectively about food safety;</li> <li>develop a modular training programme for communication coordinators in Europe;</li> <li>pilot the co-design of communication materials with Member States.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan and monitor the required actions as part of the EU framework for coordinated communication.</li> <li>Report annually on progress made to the EFSA Management Board.</li> </ul>
Improve proactive communication; scientific literacy actions; wider use of social media	Implemented	The planned activities were successfully implemented, with joint communication campaigns proving effective in increasing Member States’ communication capabilities and improving public outreach on food safety.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue monitoring against the individual campaigns plan.</li> <li>Report annually on progress made to the EFSA Management Board.</li> </ul>
Increased communication analysis and increased use of social science	Implemented	The planned activities were implemented. The approach adopted by EFSA to incorporate social science insights in its risk communication planning was defined. A working group on social research methods and advice was established. Additional upcoming actions are as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>developing an open database of evidence from social research to centralise social research and related data for EFSA and Member States;</li> <li>creating a knowledge hub for risk communication science, with ongoing engagement between the working group and EFSA’s Scientific Committee.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue monitoring the implementation against the social science roadmap.</li> <li>Report annually on progress made to the EFSA Management Board.</li> <li>Conduct a mid-term review of the social science roadmap at the end 2024 / beginning of 2025.</li> </ul>



TR action	TR implementation (process/tool)	Maturity level	Conclusion/recommendation
Increased public and stakeholder engagement	Implemented	<p>The new <a href="#">strategic engagement process</a> designed in 2021–2022 was implemented, including an increased focus on dialogue with stakeholders, a toolbox for engagement and the ‘ladder of engagement’ approach.</p> <p>Post-event satisfaction surveys indicate over 90 % satisfaction, reflecting well-received transparency and openness among EFSA’s stakeholders, reaffirmed at the sixth stakeholder forum in November 2023.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Commence strategic review to enhance registered stakeholder community, focusing on improved feedback processes and more efficient communication methods.</li> <li>▪ Advance the development of a thematic participation framework to facilitate earlier stakeholder involvement in targeted EFSA activities.</li> </ul>



### 3.4. Conclusions and directions

The assessment revealed that good progress has been made in the implementation of the EFSA Strategy 2027.

Based on the results from the KPIs, EFSA seems to be largely on track with meeting the targets set for delivering value to its customers and stakeholders across all strategic objectives. The main area of attention is the efficiency and speed of delivering EFSA scientific advice; it is recommended that this should be a top priority in the coming years. Several of the newly proposed key actions for the coming years directly address this priority. They include:

- streamlining the end-to-end risk assessment process via initiatives to reduce non-value-adding activities;
- maintaining the emphasis on strengthening partnerships for the purposes of sourcing to cover risk assessment needs.

More than 20 % of the key implementing actions are considered achieved, and related activities have been integrated into EFSA's operations. Most importantly, progress made in implementing the TR measures is considered satisfactory, to the extent that it has been proposed that they will be removed from the 'priority' list in the next phase of the EFSA strategy. Activities will nevertheless be continuously improved in operational mode, and the effectiveness of the measures will need to be monitored in the years that follow.

Two additional priority areas are put forward pertaining to the majority of key actions that are still in progress, and which are expected to address the opportunities presented by the most relevant external drivers:

1. improving risk assessment preparedness for evolving scientific and regulatory developments;
2. digital enablement and strengthened cooperation to improve EU risk assessment productivity via the reuse of assets (knowledge, data, methodological, expertise).

A set of key actions to steer EFSA in this direction is put forward in this document, ranging from the development of essential risk assessment capabilities to the setting up of interoperable systems and the evolution of the EFSA working environment and culture to sustain its strategic aspirations.



Based on these considerations, EFSA has updated the strategy implementation plan supporting its strategy execution in the second half of the strategy cycle, as shown in Table 22.

**Table 22 – Updated EFSA strategy implementation plan**

EOR	No	New key action description
EOR 2.1.1. Harmonised risk assessment culture, with the necessary knowledge and expertise, is ensured at EU level	1	Streamline the end-to-end risk assessment process by reducing non-value-added activities, from pre-submission to publication
	2	Expand the use of sourcing tools and partnership schemes to enhance risk assessment capacity
	3	Develop user-centric, interoperable digital platforms and networks that support risk assessment, coordinated communication, emerging risk detection, crisis preparedness, capacity building and innovation
	4	Establish a working environment that fosters accountability, agility, partnering, innovation and digital dexterity
	5	Evolve EFSA into a learning organisation by focusing on skills and behaviours, knowledge sharing, collaboration and improved organisational capability
	6	Implement coordinated communication (in line with the European Commission-led general plan on risk communication once adopted)
EOR 2.1.2. The quality and scale of crisis preparedness and the identification of emerging risks is improved.	1	Enhance crisis preparedness and communication governance and capacity
EOR 2.1.3. The quality of scientific guidance and methodologies, with the necessary risk assessment capabilities, is improved to address future challenges	2	Advance the development of foresight, integrated early warning systems and surveillance methods for emerging risks with partners and stakeholders
	1	Enhance proactive engagement and align guidance documents, methods, models, tools and data with those of other EU and international entities
	2	Prepare to address risk assessment challenges associated with food and feed systems innovation (*)
	3	Develop and implement systems-based approaches for regulatory environmental risk assessment (*)
	4	Develop and integrate new approach methodologies (NAMs), including omics and in silico (bio- and chemoinformatics) tools, to advance regulatory risk assessments (*)
5	Advance methods to assess human and animal exposure to chemicals across regulatory domains, with particular attention to cumulative and aggregated exposure (*)	





EOR	No	New key action description
EOR 2.1.4. Preparedness for future regulatory and policy needs, addressing the EU farm-to-fork, biodiversity and chemicals strategies, is ensured	6	Consider how microbiomes (human, animal, environment) could be included in risk assessment (*)
	1	Contribute to the implementation of the chemicals strategy for sustainability and the EU common data platform on chemicals through EFSA's open data approach and according to findability, accessibility, interoperability and reusability (FAIR) principles
	2	Engage with the EU 'one health' risk assessment and communication research agenda, from identifying priorities to developing new capabilities
	3	Contribute to the development of risk assessment approaches to address sustainable food systems
EOR 2.1.5. Wider access to and broader exploitation of data and analytics is achieved	4	Explore, in close collaboration with the Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety, the structural implications of EFSA's operations on evolving needs
	1	Improve and integrate workflows and tools for seamless collaboration on regulatory dossiers, hazard and exposure assessments, and scientific opinions
	2	Investigate the use of AI and related technologies for risk assessment and for all EFSA operations, in collaboration with EU institutions
	3	Strengthen information security to keep pace with technology advancements and comply with regulatory standards
	4	Create unified systems to standardise and simplify transactional, administrative, scientific support and management services

(\*) Develop new risk assessment capabilities.



## Annex 1 – Transparency regulation measures – detailed analysis

### TR objective 1. Improve and clarify the rules on transparency, especially with regard to scientific studies supporting risk assessment.

#### Content dossier disclosure

##### 1. State of implementation

Dossier disclosure is well implemented. Both the process and tools (OpenEFSA, Dossier Viewer, Iuclid) are established, and dossier disclosure occurs in line with the transparency regulation (TR) provisions.

As part of the intake of the dossier, a light check of the dossier's confidentiality/personal data triggers the publication of the non-confidential version of the dossier upon validity (prior to the confidentiality assessment).

Non-pesticide applications: dossier validation by EFSA in the case management tool automatically triggers the publication of the non-confidential version of the dossier, including its summary, via the OpenEFSA portal.

Pesticide applications: upon declaration of admissibility by the rapporteur Member State (RMS), the non-confidential version of the application dossier is made available on the OpenEFSA portal via the case management tool and the relevant link to Iuclid Public Instance.

##### 2. Issues with regard to the implementation of the provision

In the first few years of TR implementation, there were several cases of dossiers that could not be published or had to be taken down from OpenEFSA, as EFSA was informed that confidential and/or personal data had been wrongly disclosed. Among non-pesticide applications, no such issues were identified in 2023. Regarding pesticide applications, all dossiers have now been published, and the number of dossiers removed from OpenEFSA has greatly decreased but still occurs occasionally.

Regarding additional data requests (ADRs), the practical arrangement concerning transparency and confidentiality (Article 6, 1(c)) states 'Non-confidential versions – as submitted by applicants – of any additional or supplementary information [...] shall be made public [...] without delay, upon receipt'. However, the processes and tools in place did not allow this rule to be managed in a way that would be clear to the public. To avoid such issues, EFSA released an 'Ex ante deviation ADR dissemination' and moved the publication of additional data to after the publication of the opinion.

##### 3. Ongoing actions to address the issues identified

- Light check implemented by EFSA as part of the intake. If the light check fails, instead of simply not publishing the dossier, EFSA contacts the applicant to request a dossier update with the personal data identified removed.
- Training of Member States on performing checks as part of admissibility for the pesticide applications.
- Light check added to the admissibility checklist for pesticide applications.
- Continue raising awareness among applicants of the importance of providing a non-confidential version of the dossier.
- Filtering rules amended so that certain parts of the dossier (e.g. contact form) containing personal data are not published by default.



#### 4. TR action effects

Evidence not yet available.

#### 5. Conclusions and recommendations

Keep progressing with the ongoing product management activities to deliver continuous improvement of the tools to increase their usefulness for the public.

### Confidentiality assessment

#### 1. State of implementation

The implementation has advanced considerably, and the processes have been consolidated. However, IT tool implementation – in particular in the food chain (e.g. the Appian platform) – remains a major challenge. In addition, applicants' submission behaviour (as concerns number of applications and number of confidentiality requests) remains difficult to predict, which poses challenges in terms of planning.

#### 2. Issues with regard to the implementation of the provision

- Unexpectedly high number of confidentiality requests combined with challenges linked to tools developed for receipt and processing of confidentiality requests.
- Need to develop fit-for-purpose operating model.

#### 3. Ongoing actions to address the issues identified

- Regular leaning and optimisation initiatives.
- Additional resources dedicated to this process (statutory staff).
- Consolidation of new confidentiality operating model after reorganisation (i.e. split of former Transparency and Confidentiality team into two confidentiality teams – Confidentiality Food Chain and Pesticides Confidentiality).
- Application of *ex ante* derogation regarding the confidentiality assessment.

#### 4. TR objective effects

Evidence not yet available.

#### 5. Recommendations

It is recommended to:

- perform determined actions to resolve persisting IT issues – if needed with revamped governance and more direct control from the business;
- implement measures to understand impact of proactive transparency and to understand applicant's submission behaviour;
- optimise the confidentiality operating model with a view to gradually phasing out *ex ante* exceptions, if appropriate.



## TR objective 2. Increase the guarantees of reliability, objectivity and independence of studies used by EFSA in its risk assessment for authorisation purposes.

### Notification of studies

#### 1. State of implementation

The notification of studies provision (NOS) is well implemented and described in the [Decision laying down the practical arrangement on pre-submission phase and public consultations](#) (hereafter 'practical arrangements'). Both the process and tool ([Connect EFSA platform](#)) used by business operators and laboratories to notify studies have been established, including the administrative check to be performed by EFSA. The NOS extraction tables are correctly published on the OpenEFSA portal once the validity of the application has been confirmed.

#### 2. Issues with regard to the implementation of the provision

##### ▪ Tools

Additional work is needed to integrate the Connect EFSA platform with the dossier submission tools (E-submission Food Chain (ESFC) platform, Iuclid, Portalino). The confidentiality checks on the NOS extract (prior to publication on OpenEFSA upon confirmation of the validity of the application) are performed via email with the business operator since there is no possibility to claim confidentiality on study notifications in the Connect EFSA tool.

##### ▪ Broad scope of study definition

The current study definition as laid down in Article 2 of the EFSA practical arrangements on the pre-submission phase and public consultations applies a broad interpretation of the notion of study. This results in almost all documents submitted as part of an application dossier being notified and thus being checked by EFSA. After 2 years of experience, EFSA considered it of no added value to have prior knowledge of certain analytical measurements performed by an applicant in support of an application. EFSA therefore updated the definition of study in the Q & A on the EFSA practical arrangements to exempt analyses assessing the identity/composition of a product, including its physical and chemical properties, from the NOS obligations. The Q & A on practical arrangements was republished on 28 August 2023, resulting in a considerable reduction in the number of studies that must be notified and therefore the number of NOS checks having to be done by EFSA.

##### ▪ Proportionality of the NOS measures

With reference to the food sector areas for which the Member States are responsible for assessing compliance with the NOS obligations (pesticides, health claims), EFSA has no clear overview of how the measures are implemented by Member States. With reference to the food sector area for which EFSA is responsible for assessing compliance with the NOS obligations, it should be noted that several applications were declared not-valid or not-suitable, thus triggering the 6-month penalty.

- Procedural consequences on the validity of applications
  - The penalties are applicable only to business operators and not to laboratories. The lack of penalties weakens the NOS obligation on laboratories.
  - Penalties are applied only during the validity phase; there are currently no consequences for studies not notified or notified late when the study is submitted during the risk assessment.
  - It is difficult to assess the effectiveness of the 6-month penalty, as well as its impact on different categories of business operator and across different food sector areas.
  - The penalty and provisions do not differentiate between applications for new market authorisations and applications for renewals; in the case of new applications the



penalty will result in delayed market entry, whereas in the case of the renewals the penalty in fact guarantees that the substance will stay on the market for longer.

- The NOS provisions currently do not take into consideration the relevance of the study for the risk assessment.
- Several applications were declared not valid because they did not comply with the NOS provisions due to the applicant's lack of awareness of the provisions.

### **3. Ongoing actions to address the issues identified**

Several dedicated communications targeting business operators (including a webinar focusing on NOS) were organised in the course of 2022 and 2023 to raise awareness of the legal requirement to notify studies. In 2023, EFSA published the revised Q & A on the practical arrangements regarding studies to be notified.

### **4. TR action effects**

Following almost 3 years of practical implementation of the NOS provisions, several issues, shortcomings and loopholes have materialised. The impact of these provisions on the timelines of the intake phase and subsequent life cycle of a dossier at EFSA is considerable. Implementing the provisions also created a (bureaucratic) burden for EFSA, Member States and applicants, and several applications have been declared invalid due to lack of clarity concerning the NOS obligations, delaying possible market entry and thus negatively impacting European innovation and competitiveness.

### **5. Recommendations**

Explore a possible revision of the practical arrangements regarding implementation of NOS provisions.



## General pre-submission advice and renewal pre-submission advice, including public consultations

### 1. State of implementation

Pre-submission advice is well implemented and described in the '[Decision laying down the practical arrangements on pre-submission phase and public consultations](#)'. The process and tool are established, and the advice is provided in line with the TR provisions. The number of requests received is lower than expected, so different actions are ongoing to further promote the use of the pre-submission advice among applicants, with a focus on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

The general pre-submission advice (GPSA) service is running smoothly, sufficient resources are allocated to it and EFSA replies to potential applicants' requests on time.

The renewal pre-submission advice (RPSA) service is running smoothly, sufficient resources are allocated to it and EFSA is able to complete the administrative checks on the lists of intended studies submitted by potential applicants and launch the related public consultations on time. The drafting of the RPSA following the public consultation is done by EFSA, which has gathered enough internal knowledge to be able to deliver the advice on time. Only in the case of pesticides and the genetically modified organisms directive (Directive 2001/18/EC) is the participation of Member States required. The involvement of Member States might in a few cases lead to a slight delay in the completion of the task.

The tool ([Connect EFSA](#)) has been in operation since the entry into force of the TR. The tool is working well in managing and replying to the requests, but the number of requests for pre-submission advice remains rather low.

Requesting a new GPSA in the tool is complex compared with sending a query to 'Ask a Question', because the activation of an account and the creation of a pre-application ID are needed in advance.

### 2. Issues with regard to the implementation of the provision

- Feedback received from industry (through surveys, dedicated interviews, stakeholder meetings) indicate that scientific advice would be needed (in addition to the type of advice envisaged by the TR). Data show the rejection of several requests for GPSA, as they were out of scope of the GPSA provisions.
- The service is not well known among first-time applicants, and thus not frequently used by, for example, SMEs and first-time applicants, although they would benefit the most from the support.
- The number of GPSA requests and submissions of lists of intended studies for renewal (i.e. the first step of the RPSA process) is low. It should be noted that applicants do not submit a list of intended studies for all renewal applications, and therefore the number of RPSAs provided by EFSA is limited.
- The number of public comments on the list of intended studies for renewal applications is very low.
- Initially GPSA was provided mainly in writing, but the feedback received demonstrated that advice provided in a telemeeting is considered more useful. A pilot was run in 2023 to provide GPSA to SME applicants through a telemeeting and to provide the advice faster.

### 3. Ongoing actions to address the issues identified

Actions planned in 2024:

- fully implement the fast processing of GPSA requests by SMEs and reply via telemeeting (included in the updated Catalogue of Services);
- run a pilot on expanded GPSA measures targeting SMEs, including the following:
  - SME briefing meetings, that is, early regulatory advice to SMEs lacking experience in preparing applications;



- pre-submission meetings to prevent specific, frequent mistakes that delay the intake phase;
- calls for expressions of interest to raise awareness of the GPSA service among certain groups of applicants;
- continue raising awareness of the GPSA and RPSA services among potential applicants in presentations, at conferences and in webinars (continue attending at least one key conference per food sector area and remind potential applicants of these services at relevant EFSA events such as open plenaries and other stakeholder events);
- clarify the scope of the GPSA service (e.g. in administrative guidance on applications) to help applicants better understand what type of support they can receive.

#### **4. TR action effects**

No evidence yet of a positive impact of pre-submission advice on the quality of applications.

#### **5. Recommendations**

Explore a possible amendment of the practical arrangements to:

- streamline the process of GPSA requests;
- enhance GPSA support to SMEs;
- solicit comprehensive information in renewal applications to improve the relevance of RPSA to applicants.



## Public consultations <sup>(4)</sup> (other than renewal pre-submission advice)

### 1. State of implementation

The TR objective has been fully implemented. For all dossiers submitted after 27 March 2021 and validated and for which the non-confidential dossier has been published, a public consultation has been conducted. EFSA has streamlined its processes by uniformly utilising the Connect EFSA interface for all public consultations, ensuring consistency and efficiency. Previously, public consultations were decentralised, lacking a centralised repository for the pre-TR phase. The introduction of the Connect EFSA tool has addressed this gap, providing stakeholders with a single channel to submit comments. Moreover, the synchronisation between Connect EFSA and OpenEFSA ensures that all data associated with a consultation are readily accessible, enhancing transparency and accessibility.

### 2. Issues with regard to the implementation of the provision

- Resolution of remaining technical issues regarding the integration of Connect EFSA and OpenEFSA is ongoing.
- Awareness among relevant stakeholders of public consultations on the non-confidential version of the dossier remains low.

### 3. Ongoing actions to address the issues identified

#### IT tool issues:

- quality checks of the salesforce / Connect EFSA / OpenEFSA tools are regularly performed to tackle possible inconsistencies.

#### Low levels of customer engagement:

- public consultations on validated applications advertised in the monthly newsletter;
- in the case of sensitive topics and when deemed necessary by the scientific unit concerned, public consultations are advertised on LinkedIn and other EFSA corporate accounts and shared through mailings to the groups of stakeholders concerned. Public consultations are also advertised in the LinkedIn group 'EFSA support to applicants' where applicable;
- automatic notifications to registered users on new consultations have been enabled in the IT tool;
- root cause analysis to address low levels of engagement is ongoing.

### 4. TR action effects

The effects expected have not yet been achieved due to stakeholders' low levels of engagement.

### 5. Recommendations

It is recommended to continue investigating the root causes of low levels of engagement with the non-confidential version of validated applications as part of the quality management system.

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<sup>(4)</sup> Includes:

- public consultations on the final non-confidential version of a validated application dossier;
- public consultation on the draft renewal assessment report / draft assessment report for pesticide active substances prepared by the rapporteur Member States;
- public consultation on the draft risk assessment protocol;
- public consultation on the mandate's draft terms of reference;
- public consultation on the draft scientific output before adoption;
- public consultation to collect input on the framing of a question.





## Commission audits

### 1. State of implementation

The provision is fully implemented by DG SANTE F4 with EFSA support and follow-up when needed. In particular, EFSA provides the Unit with an overview of studies for which good laboratory practice (GLP) or International Organization for Standardization (ISO) adherence is claimed in the respective dossiers. SANTE F4 defines the facilities to be audited, and EFSA provides them with the list of notified studies and the related notified information for each of the selected facilities. Upon finalisation of the fact-finding mission, the Directorate-General (DG) for Health and Food Safety shares the reports with EFSA. In the case of non-compliance, EFSA undertakes appropriate follow-up actions.

DG SANTE F4 has access to the ESFC and Iuclid tools for consulting the respective dossiers and studies.

By the end of 2023, EFSA had received 19 reports since the TR entered into force. In only one case (FEED) study) adherence to the respective standard could not be substantiated. This was discussed by the working group, which considered the information for the evaluation of the characterisation of the additive section and concluded that the GLP findings had no impact on the outcome of the risk assessment. Therefore, no further follow-up was considered necessary.

### 2. Issues with regard to the implementation of the provision

No issues.

### 3. TR action effects

Evidence not yet available.

### 4. Recommendations

No recommendations. The process is working, and good cooperation has been established, with DG SANTE F4 attending EFSA's GLP working group meetings.



## Verification studies

### 1. State of implementation

No mandate for a verification study has been submitted by the European Commission to EFSA since the TR entered into force. The EFSA proposal for a pilot on verification studies was not viewed favourably. In agreement with DG Health and Food Safety, EFSA uses the budget for verification studies (approximately EUR 15 million per year) in a proactive way, that is, for implementing preparedness activities to prevent the need for *ex post* verification studies. For example, the new approach methodologies (NAMs) activities could fill in data gaps and divergencies. With the NAMs activities, different ways of working were adopted to guarantee a more robust assessment and methodology. A [paper by Garcia-Vello et al. \(2022\)](#) provides a full overview of the nine topics covered under preparedness activities (which utilise the budget earmarked for verification studies).

### 2. Issues with regard to the implementation of the provision

Not applicable.

### 3. Ongoing actions to address the issues identified

Not applicable.

### 4. TR action effects

While roadmaps are successfully being translated into projects that are paving the way for improved risk assessment outputs, it is too early to collect evidence on the final impacts.

### 5. Recommendations

Assess the effectiveness of activities arising from roadmaps that have been launched as a successful way of mitigating the need for verification studies. This ought to be carried out in preparation for the new multiannual financial framework, post 2027.



## TR objective 3. Improve the governance, strengthen the involvement of Member States and address the limitations affecting the long-term scientific capacity of EFSA.

Management board representatives and non-governmental organisations on EFSA's management board

### 1. State of implementation

The provision is fully implemented, with the new Management Board operational as of 1 July 2022 (see ['Rules of procedure of the Management Board of the European Food Safety Authority'](#)).

### 2. Issues with regard to the implementation of the provision

No issues.

### 3. TR action effects

Higher engagement of Member States, EU institutions and stakeholders in EFSA's governance.

### 4. Recommendations

No recommendations.

New expert selection process

### 1. State of implementation

The ['Implementing rule of the Management Board of the European Food Safety Authority laying down the rules on the selection, appointment and operations of the Scientific Committee, scientific panels and of their working groups'](#) was adopted in 2022. In 2023, EFSA published a call for expression of interest for scientific experts in view of the panel renewal in 2024. Based on the data, the number of applications increased by 40 % compared with the response rate of the previous call launched in 2018. Member States were involved in the dissemination as per the TR. New panel experts were appointed in March 2024. In parallel, EFSA is conducting an analysis of the current panel system operational framework as indicated below.

- EFSA commissioned a scientific literature review on group decision-making models to collect recommendations for a possible review of EFSA's panel system. The findings can be summarised in four main recommendations as follows.
  - Panel size. Research has shown that a large number of participants can limit meaningful face-to-face interactions and therefore have a negative impact on the efficiency of decision-making.
  - Group consensus. Research has highlighted that not requiring group participants to reach a consensus can positively influence efficiency. Alternative methods such as statistical data modelling of individual panellist's responses could be adopted instead.
  - Group tenure. This is defined in the literature as the average number of years each member has worked in the group. The review found that membership changes in recently formed groups can have positive effects, whereas the effects can be negative in long-term groups.
  - Anonymity or the use of 'pen names' or user IDs. This can foster more dynamic and rich discussions, as participants may feel more comfortable sharing their points of



view and evaluating other members' contributions free from potential bias based on the person sharing the opinion.

- Two workshops were organised in 2022 between EFSA senior management and DG Health and Food Safety to examine possible changes to EFSA's operating model, with a focus on improving efficiency and fitness for purpose. The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) method was chosen to structure the input, combining retrospective and prospective analysis. EFSA will follow up on the workshop in the coming months with more specific analysis and consultations with the different scientific units and panels, along with reflections at the management level.

The inputs collected during the workshops will be used to elaborate recommendations for change.

## **2. Issues with regard to the implementation of the provision**

No issues.

## **3. TR action effects**

Overall, the involvement of Member States in the dissemination activities proved effective in terms of number and quality of applicants.

## **4. Recommendations**

The new expert selection process led to a significant increase in the number of applications received. A feedback mechanism will be put in place to review the fulfilment of mutual commitments outlined under the Declaration of Commitment, facilitating exchange between EFSA and experts regarding reciprocal contribution and support.



## New experts' indemnity regime

### 1. State of implementation

The new expert indemnities regime applicable from 1 January 2023 allows EFSA to attract proper expertise via a compensation package, while maintaining overall best value for money. The expert compensation guide was reviewed to harmonise the rates between tele- and physical meetings. In particular, virtual meeting rates were aligned to the physical meeting hourly rate of EUR 150/hour, up to a maximum of EUR 900/day of meeting. EFSA is also working on a new project to centralise the logistic management of meetings and to establish a simplified and streamlined expert reimbursement scheme supported by an interoperable user-friendly tool. The development of a new strategy for managing the experts' community and the establishment of an experts' care service are also ongoing.

### 2. Issues with regard to the implementation of the provision

No issues.

### 3. TR objectives effects

The new expert indemnities regime applicable from 1 January 2023 allows EFSA to attract proper expertise via a compensation package, while maintaining overall best value for money.

### 4. Recommendations

Continue monitoring the efficiency of the new compensation guide, considering the changing environment.

## Outsourcing of preparatory work and insourcing of experts' work

### 1. State of implementation

EFSA has put in place several initiatives to increase its risk assessment capacity via outsourcing:

- An increase in outsourcing via grants and procurements to Member States, in particular for business-as-usual (BAU) risk assessment tasks (mainly via framework partnership agreements (FPAs), from EUR 9 million in 2019 to EUR 35 million in 2023 and EUR 37 million in 2024, of which 20 million was for BAU risk assessment (compared with 5 million in 2019).
- A new [partnerships process](#) (to identify and promote opportunities to collaborate and co-invest with Member State partners in the delivery of risk assessment) and the new [strategic outsourcing decisions process](#) (to help EFSA units secure the most effective sourcing solutions, including procurement schemes with other EU agencies/institutions).
- A strengthened approach by Member State focal points towards the increased promotion of EFSA's outsourcing initiatives, and an increase in the number of organisations actively cooperating with EFSA in the execution of its scientific work programme (standard tasks and tailor-made activities). The new focal points operational framework 2023–2027 was successfully implemented in 2023, with very good uptake from Member States. It was piloted in 2023, with 24 out of 29 countries making use of the maximum grant value per country. The positive trend is confirmed by the consistent budget increase from EUR 2 million (until 2022) to EUR 6 million (2023).
- The development of tools to support the process, including Microsoft Teams and SharePoint for collaboration, including meetings; Microsoft Lists for an overview of all proposals submitted; Power BI for visualisations on tailor-made activities; and the Microsoft Office suite for guidelines, best practices, planning, reporting and budget monitoring.
- The promotion of the individual scientific advisor (ISA) support scheme to complement and support EFSA's scientific work through the provision of expert advice (via remunerated external experts), without overlapping with or replacing the EFSA panel and expert working groups system.



- A strengthened FPA financial instrument to enable long-term partnerships, with a milestone multiannual trans-panel FPA signed in 2023: 'Support to EFSA in the risk assessment of food enzymes, food additives, food flavourings and feed additives'.

EFSA has carried out a number of initiatives to increase its internal scientific capacity and ease the tasks/work of the Scientific Committee and panel members by transferring these to EFSA staff (insourcing). These initiatives include:

- increasing the capacity of EFSA scientific staff for BAU activities (from 247 in 2022 to 263 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff planned in 2024), for carrying out preparatory work for the Scientific Committee and panels (new posts and posts transferred to risk assessment within EFSA), and for driving the development of partnerships and outsourcing as a long-term solution;
- piloting the use of artificial intelligence (AI) to support and relieve the workload of both experts and staff;
- lean initiatives to optimise working group and panel productivity, also via the transfer of tasks to the EFSA scientific secretariat (e.g. enzymes, feed additives, pesticides).

## 2. Issues with regard to the implementation of the provision

Partnering schemes. Establishing partnering schemes has proven to demand significant effort, from both EFSA and Member States, due to:

- different Member State systems, capacities and interests;
- the time required for the development and implementation of fit-for-purpose financial instruments.

Focal points.

- Focal point model implemented in pilot mode, requiring continuous improvement and adjustment.
- Sustainability of model (resources and budgetary constraints) requires reviewing.
- Challenges noticed while running the assessment and decision-making process for focal points' tailor-made activities with the internal parties consulted.
- Technical issues with some Member States' Teams and Power BI access rights.
- Other tool-related issues (e.g. template for submission of focal points' tailor-made proposals not fully fit for purpose).

Insourcing. Transferring tasks from panels and the Scientific Committee requires detailed analysis of the working modalities across the different food sectors, including lengthy change management. AI has presented a multitude of challenges (governance, legal, technical) and uncertainty about the pace of its implementation and final impact.



### 3. Ongoing actions to address the issues

#### Outsourcing.

- Entrusting work to Member States is of the highest priority for EFSA, with increasing allocation of resources and priority agenda items in all governance, including the Management Board, the Advisory Forum and the focal points.
- Lessons learned on the novel financial instruments to be regularly assessed and opportunities for improvements to be implemented in subsequent years.

#### Focal points.

- Lessons learned and opportunities for improvement stemming from pilot phase to be deployed in 2024, with subsequent consolidation of focal points operational framework.
- Sustainability of the model (resources and financial) within the current strategic cycle (until 2027) to be reassessed in 2024.
- Fine-tuning of assessment and decision-making process, including procedures optimization.
- Access rights technical issues to be addressed.

#### Insourcing.

- Speed of risk assessment root cause analysis initiative to address the end-to-end risk assessment processes, including identifying opportunities for improving the workforce model.
- AI governance project to set up the basis for and first pilots on the use of AI in risk assessment. Participation in the EU agencies network AI initiative.

#### Resource availability.

- Safeguarding and prioritising BAU budget and human resources, particularly grants with Member States.
- Seeking partnerships with other EU institutions and agencies to gain additional resources (e.g. partnerships in EU research projects under Horizon Europe, and partnerships with DG Health and Food Safety and other DGs and respective agencies to deliver joint work).

### 4. TR action effect

Evidence not yet available.

### 5. Recommendations

- Outsourcing activities are to be continued and maintained as a key priority.
- Additional activities related to the speed of risk assessment root cause analysis initiative are ongoing and could lead to follow-up actions, including in terms of insourcing opportunities.
- Continue to explore the use of AI to reduce the workload of experts and staff.
- Maintain the shift of internal resources (FTEs) to BAU risk assessment.



## TR objective 4. Develop more effective and transparent risk communication with the public in collaboration with Member States.

### Coordinated communication between risk assessors and risk managers

#### 1. State of implementation

When looking at the overall progress of the action, as mandated by the TR, the activities planned for 2022 and 2023 have been implemented/achieved. Open issues will be tackled in the period up to 2027, aligned with the strategy timeline. Relevant actions have been defined and planned.

The directions proposed by EFSA to meet its current and future obligations as a source of public information and communication on food-related risks in the EU are described in the editorial '[Future directions for risk communications at EFSA](#)'.

The TR mandates EFSA, the European Commission and Member States to enhance food safety risk communication in Europe. This directive spurs continuous initiatives to establish a unified approach for coordinated risk communication in the food chain with both the general public and the relevant stakeholders by EU and national entities. EFSA is actively allocating resources to collaborations with Member States, agreeing on shared objectives, processes and tasks for coordinated communication. This includes redistributing EFSA's budget to Member States to bolster national capacity and skills for effective implementation.

Under the focal point operational framework, EFSA has established clearly defined administrative and financial instruments to enable the delivery of the activities to develop a model and methodology for coordinated communication.

In 2023 the following deliverables were undertaken.

- Deliverable 1. Member States/EFSA working groups agree on terms of reference – methodology and timetable (including milestones) for activity. Deadline 30 June 2023.
- Deliverable 2. Draft report for consultation with Communications Experts Network (CEN) and focal points networks. Deadline November 2023.
- Deliverable 3. Final report considering all relevant comments from consultation and fulfilling the terms of reference. Includes implementation plan. Deadline 31 January 2024.

The concluding report will pave the way for an implementation plan spanning 2024 and beyond. The upcoming EU framework for coordinated communication assigns EFSA and Member States responsibility for strengthening coordination and collaboration, leveraging existing foundations. This entails maintaining structures such as the CEN while implementing more systematic and well-resourced strategies for coordinated communications. Following agreement, these new approaches will be integrated into the terms of reference of the CEN.

To support and enrich the coordinated framework, several other activities were carried out to lay key building blocks for the work with Member States going forward, as follows.

- **CEN and focal points best practice joint working.** Co-authored draft report with Croatia.





- **Member State communication coordinator pilot programme.**
- **Member State Joint communication products.**
- A **working group** comprising focal point and CEN representatives from 12 participating Member States and EFSA was formed to work on the EU framework. The working group met virtually once a month to discuss current progress on the document and reach a consensus where necessary. The meetings were recorded and published on EFSA's digital exchange platform (Microsoft Teams / SharePoint). An in-person workshop was also held in May 2023. In addition, ad hoc online exchanges took place among group members between the meetings to share ideas and work on the document. The group worked in project mode, as follows.
  - The activity was treated as a project, with defined deliverables and timelines for their completion.
  - Co-creating the deliverable. As indicated in the specific agreements, the aim was for a Member State to lead on the development of the outputs, with EFSA providing high-level support, including secretariat support for scheduling meetings, recording and making notes on meetings, highlighting follow-up actions, gathering input and helping produce draft and final versions of reports.
  - Using Microsoft Teams as the main tool for hosting meetings and also for creating, editing and finalising documents. Outlook was also used when any Member State had difficulty accessing Teams.

## 2. Issues with regard to the implementation of the provision

- Foster a community of Member State communication coordinators (MSCCs) and implement capacity-building actions.

The goal of the newly proposed MSCC is to provide a key resource dedicated to facilitating and implementing the EU framework for coordinated communication. This function, proposed annually to all Member States, aims to strengthen coordinated communication efforts to provide citizens with accurate, accessible, timely and tailored information about risks and advice related to food. Each country can choose whether to use it, depending on its specific conditions. If chosen by the Member State, the function will:

- support and enhance the part of the work of the CEN and focal point networks dedicated to communicating with citizens on food safety issues;
- be managed/coordinated by one or both network members depending on the configuration and allocation of communication tasks in each Member State.

Challenges include recruitment and management of the MSCC, defining the job profile for and capacity building of the individuals recruited and providing a context by fostering a community.

- **Use of EFSA communication tools by Member States**

EFSA has developed several effective tools to facilitate communication planning and evaluation and will explore if and how it can make these tools available to Member States over time. Possible tools to be shared by EFSA are (i) a communication assessment planning tool; (ii) an analytics tool – EFSA uses a Microsoft tool called Power BI to monitor and assess the impact of the range of its communications; (iii) a social media listening tool (e.g. Pulsar); and (iv) social research tools.

EFSA's tools are a combination of internally developed and externally purchased tools customised for specific needs. Evaluation is needed before sharing them with Member State partners, and the feasibility, timing and resources required need to be considered.



Challenges include tool access issues, EFSA's compliance with software licensing agreements with external contractors, compatibility and interoperability issues, and ensuring that the tool is aligned with Member States' operating systems.

### 3. Ongoing actions to address the issues identified

- **Foster a community of MSCCs; implement capacity-building actions.**

To verify that the agreed job profile is fit for purpose, there is a need to regularly review the role and responsibilities. In relation to the capacity-building aspect, to ensure that the MSCC function is fulfilling its purpose and is supporting coordinated communications (i) in accordance with general principles set out in the EU framework and (ii) tailored to national priorities and context, there is a need to develop an MSCC work programme / objectives to define the configuration of the function (external/internal recruitment / 'Norway' model, outsourcing, etc.).

- **Use of EFSA communication tools and challenges.**

In order to overcome the challenges related to the tools, in the implementation plan of the EU framework it has been decided to (i) create a unified Teams channel for focal points and the CEN; (ii) develop a dissemination approach or tool for Member States to optimise outreach to audiences and/or national partners; and (3) share EFSA communication tools – examine how and to what extent EFSA can share relevant communication planning, monitoring and measurement tools with Member States.

### 4. TR action effects

There are three levels of effects, as indicated here.

- **The definition of and agreement on an EU framework for coordinated communication.** The framework is to be approved in 2024 after extensive consultation and pilot activities in 2023. This framework aims to strengthen coordination and cooperation by building upon the current firm foundations (CEN / focal point networks).
- **The creation of a function, the MSCC,** to fully contribute to all types of coordinated communication activities, either supporting the CEN member or working independently, depending on the wishes of the Member State. From 1 February 2023 to 31 January 2024 10 Member States took part in a pilot programme to trial the optimal structure, objectives and tasks of a dedicated MSCC resource to build capacity in Member States to implement the EU coordinated communication framework in their national context.
- **The success of joint efforts,** that is, coordinated communication campaigns. Campaigns are a highly effective method of building capacity in Member States and reaching defined audiences to achieve specific goals. EFSA and the Member States have been conducting the joint campaign model since 2020. Evidence of its success is (i) the increase in the number of campaigns EFSA has launched since 2020 (three in 2023) and (ii) the increase in the number of Member States signing up to participate in them.

### 5. Conclusions and recommendations

- Actions are to be planned and monitored as part of the EU framework for coordinated communication implementation and Communications Unit workplan.
- An annual presentation is to be made to update the Management Board on progress.



Improve proactive communication, scientific literacy actions wider use of social media.

## 1. State of implementation

When looking at the overall progress of the action, as mandated by the TR, the activities planned for the last 5 years have been implemented/achieved. Some issues remain open and will be tackled in the period up to 2027, aligned with the strategy timeline. Relevant actions have been defined and planned.

Based on the experience gained in recent years, the collaborative approach of developing and running joint communication campaigns has been highly effective in building communication capacity in Member States and enhancing outreach to citizen audiences on food safety issues.

In response to a mandate received by the European Commission to provide 'technical assistance in the field of risk communication', EFSA issued a report, '[Technical assistance in the field of risk communication](#)', to assess peer-reviewed and grey literature on risk communication concepts and practices. The aim of the report is to support the implementation of the general plan on risk communication, that is, an integrated framework for EU food safety risk assessors and risk managers at the Union and national levels, as required by the revised EU general food law regulation.

The report recommends, inter alia, that joint campaigns are used as a tool to raise public awareness of how the EU food safety system works and the role played by science.

EFSA has been developing an approach for joint pan-EU campaigns with Member States since 2019, when it launched its first EU-wide campaign, [EUandMyFood](#). In 2023, EFSA was running three campaigns simultaneously:

- [#Stop ASF](#)
- [#EUChooseSafeFood \(Safe2Eat\)](#)
- [#PlantHealth4Life](#).

The joint campaign approach is taking shape in the following phases of the process:

- selection of campaign themes;
- campaign development;
- support for Member States;
- campaign delivery;
- results and analysis.

This approach optimises resources and expertise, as well as ensuring that communication efforts are locally relevant and consistent. As mentioned in the final draft of the EU framework on coordinated communication, joint campaigns allow national food safety authorities and EFSA to pool resources and expertise, which optimises return on budgetary investment and enhances the efficiency of communication efforts. They also create opportunities for knowledge exchange and cross-pollination of best practice as institutions learn from each other.

Still in the realm of this action aimed at a 'wider use of social media', a joint Instagram account with the European Parliament Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) agencies was created in 2022. It stems from the idea of promoting the 'one health' approach to the public at large, explaining the work carried out by the ENVI agencies and its concrete value to EU citizens. This initiative aims to highlight the key role of the ENVI agencies and how they contribute to specific EU priority areas (i.e. European Green Deal, farm-to-fork strategy). It also aims to highlight the areas where the agencies work in



a collaborative way and prepare the ground for a coordinated, interagency approach to communication, as advocated by the ENVI agencies' executive directors. This contributes to maintaining and increasing public trust in the EU and demonstrates its relevance to citizens. It is a clear example of a smaller campaign managed together with European Commission and sister agencies.

Each campaign has a dedicated website serving as a repository for all assets in various languages. EFSA utilises a shared Teams space with contractors for smoother communication and feedback on assets. Teams serves as a collaboration tool for creative concepts, content and multilingual material. Two main contractors supported EFSA on campaigns, with specific handovers for assets when contracts ended. Handovers were done, such as in the case of StopASF, via hard disk and will transition to a dedicated repository. Email was primarily used for communication with partners (e.g. Enetwild for StopASF) and CEN and focal point members.

## 2. Issues with regard to the implementation of the provision

- **Annual budget planning:** Managing contracts for pan-EU campaigns proves challenging annually. Based on our experience, we recommended exploring the feasibility of a multiannual budget. This approach would facilitate campaign management, including dissemination activities, avoiding complications.
- **Increased Member State participation with an unchanged budget:** Throughout the campaigns EFSA has undertaken, Member States were encouraged to participate each year. While the campaigns' success is correlated with a growing number of participating Member States, it is difficult to sustain the impact without a budget increase, and there is a risk of the impact being diluted.
- **Campaign termination decision:** #StopASF concluded in 2023 due to budget constraints. When considering internal resource allocation, the campaign teams signalled the need to establish criteria for deciding when to conclude a campaign and when to initiate a new one.

## 3. Ongoing actions to address the issues identified

- **Annual budget planning:** Switching to a multiannual budget for campaigns would substantially improve the process and impact – for EFSA, Member States and the contractor. Currently, production is implemented every 2 years, or in some cases (#EUCSF) starts the year before.
- **Increased Member State participation with an unchanged budget:** As of 2024, it was decided to implement a tiered approach for #EUChooseSafeFood (Safe2Eat) and #PlantHealth4Life – in other words, define a system where countries, on a rotation basis, can benefit from full participation and support from a multiannual perspective.
- **Campaign termination decision:** Discussions on the above-mentioned criteria are ongoing. Budget constraints was the main reason for terminating the #StopASF campaign, but it was decided to capitalise on the assets produced by finding opportunities to translate them into languages that were not targeted in the past year and to devote specific social media paid advertising to follow-up activities.

## 4. TR action effects

Regarding the #StopASF campaign, an annual evaluation of campaign impact was conducted. Notable highlights include the following.

- **Media impact:** All countries exceeded overall KPIs, with a remarkable 138 % more media results earned than expected. Earned media results increased by approximately 60 % compared with 2022.
- **Stakeholder engagement:** Overall KPIs were surpassed and fully met by 14 out of 17 countries. The number of stakeholder results was robust and balanced across countries.



**Paid activities:** The campaign was promoted at more events (five, compared with one in 2022), expanding outreach to a larger audience and facilitating direct contact and increased engagement with target audiences. The 'Out of Home' pilot in Romania proved successful, particularly in reaching backyard farmers.

The successful reach achieved by the #EUChooseSafeFood campaign can be clearly seen in the results of the post-campaign survey. Notable highlights include the following.

- **Paid activities.** The division of the campaign into two waves, one aimed at reach and the other at traffic, allowed for each of the paid activities to reach an audience of 114 million rather than the expected 86 million.'
- **VICE.** The campaign collaborated with VICE (a leading media and entertainment platform targeting the young generation) in the publication of three articles on its website. The articles were viewed 120 000 times.

**Impact.** The campaign reached a younger target audience (25–45 years) as well as more men. The messages conveyed by the campaign were correctly recognised by 40 % of the audience. The post campaign analysis shows that the 2023 campaign had a limited impact compared with previous years, attributed mainly to the low investment.

Noteworthy effects of the first year of the campaign include:

- **Out of Home** campaign – PlantHealth4Life was launched through a campaign reaching 16 million contacts;
- **impact** – the results of the survey following the campaign showed that 7 in 10 respondents recognised the key messages;
- **media coverage** – PlantHealth4Life had extensive media coverage that produced more than 359 media clippings and 71 million contacts reached, including 690 000 passengers of Brussels Airlines.

## 5. Conclusions and recommendations

- Actions to be planned and monitored as part of the individual campaign's plan (#EUChooseSafeFood (Safe2Eat) and #PlantHealth4Life).
- Annual presentation to be made to the Management Board on progress and results of evaluations.

## Increased communication analysis and increased social science

### 1. State of implementation

When looking at the overall progress of the action, as mandated by the social science roadmap, the activities planned for 2022 and 2023 have been implemented/achieved. Issues that remain open will be tackled in the remaining roadmap period up to 2027, aligned with the strategy timeline. Relevant actions have been defined and planned. In terms of audience perceptions and knowledge, the following targets have been identified:

- for the public at large, the goal is to increase the percentage of Europeans aware of the EU food safety system and the institutions – this ranges between 60 % and 70 % according to the 2022 Eurobarometer but can potentially increase further with targeted communication campaigns (in place);
- for customers stakeholders and partners, the goal is to reach the target set in the annual strategy survey for risk communication, and specifically the item 'EFSA's ability to inform its risk communication activities with appropriate actions, i.e. planning, monitoring, social research and evaluation'.



The latter meets the target in the view of DG Health and Food Safety and partners but requires further targeted actions, with stakeholders to be included in the EFSA work plan for the coming year(s).

The fitness check of the EU general food law and public debates over the approach and management of sensitive substances indicate that the risk analysis process requires social science expertise. The proposal of the European Commission on the transparency and sustainability of the EU risk assessment in the food chain seeks to address citizens' demands that the risk assessment process be more transparent and the need to make risk communication more effective and coherent across different actors in Europe. To implement the proposed measures, there is a clear need for monitoring, understanding and considering risk perceptions (see Article 8b(c) of the TR) as well as exploring adequate ways of engaging citizens to strengthen the trust Europeans have in the food safety system.

A first [roadmap for applying social science](#) in the work of EFSA was prepared in 2019; it was subsequently [updated](#) to align it to the 2027 strategy. The social science implementation is envisaged in the [EFSA strategy 2027](#), under EOR 1.2.1, 'An audience-first approach ensures quality throughout risk communication', and contributes to expected outcome 1.2, 'Increased relevance and improved reputation of EFSA's risk communication'.

EFSA's audience-first approach is further explained in the 2021 editorial '[Future directions for risk communications at EFSA](#)'. The approach adopted by EFSA to incorporate social science insights in its risk communication planning is described in the article '[Societal insights in risk communication planning – a structured approach](#)'.

To align the implementation of this TR measure with the value of excellence in science, the COM Unit set up a working group on social research methods and advice (EFSA's first process improvement initiative back in 2019). The working group composition and its deliberations are [publicly available](#).

In response to a request from the European Commission, EFSA delivered a [scientific report](#) in 2021 to support the implementation of the general plan on risk communication, that is, an integrated framework for EU food safety risk assessors and risk managers at the EU and national levels. The report included a scoping review of social research studies and official reports in relation to risk communication in the following areas: understanding and awareness of risk analysis roles and tasks, reducing misunderstanding of the different meaning of the terms 'hazard' and 'risk', tackling misinformation and disinformation, enhancing confidence in EU food safety, taking account of risk perceptions, key factors in trade-offs about risks, audience segmentation, and tools, channels and mechanisms for coordinated risk communications.

The report has, inter alia, delivered a segmentation model to be used for food safety risk communication. The model was applied in 2022 and 2023 in support of the design of three EFSA-led coordinated communication campaigns: [Stop ASF](#), [EU Choose Safe Food](#) and [PlantHealth4Life](#).

Regarding the implementation of the roadmap, the EFSA management team has agreed on three implementation scenarios in 2019. Given the resource levels, EFSA implemented scenario 2 in 2019 and 2020 and scenario 3 as of 2021 (an additional two FTEs joined the team).

Scenario implementation tracking was automated using a Power BI report as of 2020, and historical data can be retrieved. EFSA managed to implement all the planned scenarios throughout the strategy period (the 2022 result for scenario 3 was 98.1 %; the 2023 result for scenario 3 was 103.8 %).

For communication planning purposes, EFSA developed a tool using Microsoft PowerApps technology – the communication assessment and planning tool. This tool automates the communication decision tree explained in '[Societal insights in risk communication planning –](#)





[a structured approach](#) and allows for integration of data streams (e.g. social research, social media listening, media analysis, web metrics and other EFSA databases). This approach was implemented and refined by EFSA from 2019 to 2021 to become an integral part of communications planning across the life cycle within the Strategy 2027. The assessment of incoming mandates considered for communication is performed via a monthly communication planning meeting where colleagues across the Communication and Partnership department jointly assess communication needs based on data provided on customers', partners', stakeholders' and the public's views and perceptions on the matter. As with most change to working practices, the rate and efficiency of embedding the process and tool in EFSA's communications planning process varied based on several factors, including individual skills and needs, and frequency of use. EFSA social scientists provide in-house training and ongoing support to colleagues to ensure continuous improvement in this respect. The communication planning aspect of this process is measured via a process performance indicator that looks at communication to target audiences (actual versus planned, identified based on social research input).

## 2. Issues with regard to the implementation of the provision

- **Coordination of Member States' and EFSA's social research data.** As noted in the social science roadmap, the [CEN](#) remains EFSA's key partner when designing, implementing and analysing results of social research conducted across the EU. CEN members actively participate in the design of EFSA-led research and inform EFSA regularly on how they use the results, often expressing appreciation and support for the research. A joint project on hazard and risk was also implemented with the CEN, including Member States' participation in focus groups that led to the development of communication material. However, in terms of social research conducted by Member States, some issues still remain in terms of coordinating use of agreed questionnaires and sharing research data with EFSA and other Member States (refer to [social science roadmap](#) priority 2 – 'open database' of evidence from social research).
- **Integration of social science expertise beyond EFSA strategic communications.** Considerable progress has been made over the last 3 years in integrating social science beyond EFSA's strategic communication needs. Examples include joint work with scientific units in producing guidance documents ([MUST-B](#); risk-benefit guidance update ongoing) as well as integrating social research and social listening into the design of communication and engagement activities (see [New Genomic Techniques example](#)). However, challenges remain in terms of integrating the use of social research and social listening insights into the work of EFSA beyond the function responsible for roadmap implementation (refer to [social science roadmap](#) priority 2 – 'a knowledge hub for risk communication science at EFSA; regular interaction between the working group and EFSA's Scientific Committee').

## 3. Ongoing actions to address the issues identified

As the social science roadmap implementation continues towards its 2027 targets, actions are ongoing to address both issues identified above, as follows.

- **'Open database' of evidence from social research.** Since late 2022, EFSA has been working on the design of a 'social research' data hub that will provide a one-stop shop for EFSA and Member States to access all available social research, social listening and literature review data on selected topics of interest or under the remit of the institutions. During 2023, the prototype was presented and agreed with Member States. The plan for 2024 is to share the database with Member States, with all EFSA data included and readily available, and pilot the upload and use of Member States' data in 2025–2026.
- **Knowledge hub for risk communication science at EFSA; regular interaction between the working group and EFSA's Scientific Committee.** As per the roadmap, the knowledge hub includes the finalisation of the evidence-based risk communication roadmap (SPIDO) that was due in March 2024 and investment in the



follow-up projects for which resources have been secured under the NEXT programme. With regard to the interaction of our evolving working group and interaction with the Scientific Committee, social science expertise was included among the required mix of skills as part of the [call for scientific experts](#) for the 2024–2029 composition of the Scientific Committee. Upon a thorough review and completion of the exercise, the committee agreed to nominate one social scientist to the new Scientific Committee and received the support of the Management Team to this effect.

#### 4. TR objective effect

There are three levels of effects, as indicated here.

- The integration of social science and communication analysis into EFSA's risk communication work, as measured by strategy KPI leverage of social science, which looks at how many communication priorities have benefited from social research (the indicator stood at 100 % in 2022 and 2023) in 2023 is included in social research support to all three coordinated communication campaigns, as well as other communication priorities, including bisphenol A, avian influenza, panel renewal and glyphosate.
- The extent of joint communication efforts with Member States, DG Health and Food Safety and ENVI agencies, benefiting from social research activities, as measured by strategy KPI joint communication efforts, which stood at 98.9 % in 2023. The idea is that well-informed communication efforts will ensure buy-in from key partners. In 2023, EFSA managed to engage in some sort of communication efforts jointly with DG Health and Food Safety, ENVI agencies and 26 Member States.
- The success of joint efforts, that is, coordinated communication campaigns (see TR measure on coordinated communication for more details).

#### 5. Recommendations

As per above, actions to be planned and monitored as part of the social science roadmap.

Annual presentation to be made to the Management Board on EFSA's audience-first efforts.

Mid-term review of the social science roadmap expected in late 2024/early 2025.

## Increased public and stakeholder engagement

### 1. State of implementation

The provision is fully implemented. EFSA continues to improve the efficiency and impact of engagement and external relations advice. The new strategic engagement process was designed in 2021–2022 and implemented from 2023 onwards. It was based on a theoretical concept paper on what is needed for engagement and the ladder of engagement. KPIs and impact indicators were defined. The execution of the strategic engagement process led EFSA to provide engagement advice for over 60 mandates, with 18 topics followed more closely as tactical or thematic engagement plans (e.g. animal welfare, novel foods, precision fermentation and cell cultured meat, NGTs). Positive feedback on EFSA's topic-based engagement approach was received internally and from external stakeholders (external stakeholder satisfaction with events was > 90 %).

In parallel, on the external relations side, EFSA continues to organise leadership visits (Food and Drug Administration visit, visit to Copenhagen to meet World Health Organization Europe, Danish National Food Institute (DTU) and the European Environment Agency, etc.) and support meetings with EFSA's senior management and external parties (e.g. Community Plant Variety Office, DG Health and Food Safety, European Medicines Agency).

The relationships with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, World Health Organisation and World Organization for Animal Health were further strengthened





through different initiatives. All this contributes to EFSA's openness and transparency policy and the need for stronger partnerships with our European partners.

A detailed mapping of ecosystems was procured. The third pillar of the process, the monitoring of ecosystem actors, will be strengthened by an external service providing ecosystem monitoring.

Finally, after a series of workshops, EFSA updated its stakeholder engagement approach, which was endorsed by EFSA's Management Board.

The engagement methods were organised in an interactive Member State list catalogue allowing for easy filtering and browsing. The methods are categorised into two main groups: (i) methods to identify/select contributors and (ii) methods to engage with partners and stakeholders. Each method is accompanied by a short description, along with information on when and how to apply it, and the relevant target audiences. This resource goes hand in hand with other sections of the website, offering practical insights on tools, formats and real-world case studies. This resource is available for all EFSA staff. Information and exchanges on this tool were shared with different ENVI agencies.

## **2. Issues with regard to the implementation of the provision**

A survey in 2022 indicated a lower degree of satisfaction with engagement opportunities during the risk assessment process compared with the previous year (mainly industry representatives).

## **3. Ongoing actions to address the issues identified**

This survey was undertaken after a series of issues with the new tools established in the frame of the TR. Issues were raised by applicants and industry representatives. Satisfaction surveys sent after every topic-based engagement event resulted in a + 90 % satisfaction rate. This demonstrated that the openness and transparency applied in organising engagement events around topics is very well appreciated by our external stakeholders and partners. A high degree of satisfaction was also confirmed at the occasion of the sixth stakeholder forum (November 2023).

## **4. Effects of the TR measure**

Not yet available.

## **5. Conclusion and recommendations**

Based on the experience gathered so far, the following actions are recommended:

- initiate a general strategic reflection on the future of stakeholder engagement to ensure an increased level of engagement, which would encompass strengthened feedback mechanisms, streamlined communication channels and protocols;
- further development of a framework for thematic participation, in particular by streamlining the early involvement of stakeholders in specific areas of EFSA's work.



## Annex 2 – Performance framework updates

**Table 23 – Transformation priorities and related KPIs**

Transformation priority	KPI	Target	
1	Increase speed of risk assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Throughput time in days from question receipt to publication of risk assessment output (disaggregated by toll gate and risk assessment type)</li> </ul>	50% reduction
2	Improve preparedness in risk assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Percentage of targeted capabilities for which exploratory/development projects have started</li> <li>Percentage of development phase projects that started without first completing exploratory phase</li> <li>Percentage of targeted capabilities on track for integration into BAU on time</li> <li>Percentage of targeted capabilities actually integrated on time into BAU</li> </ul>	Under definition
3	Improve productivity in risk assessment via digital enablement and cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase reuse of knowledge assets (methods, data, etc.)</li> </ul>	Under definition